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ROOFLESS



1. *Amorpha*

10

E. H. P.
C. H. a.

To Saml Loag
comp of author
J. L. Vaneau



"Into each life some rain must fall;
But I stand roofless to it all."



ROOFLESS.

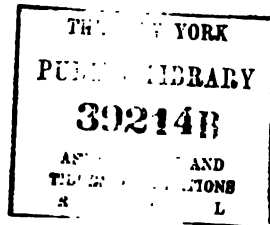
A ROMANCE IN RHYME.

BY
I. L. VANSANT.

LC.

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1885.
MRS



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INTRODUCTION.



NE bright June day I, heedless,
strolled,

In museful, solitary mood,
Along the path where seaward
rolled,

Margined with fringe of fragrant
wood,

The whisper-murmuring Brandy-
wine.

No footstep grieves the silent walk,
Nor frets the slow, inconstant wind,
No troubled echoes wake and talk—

I'd left the clashing world behind,
The shades of solitude were mine.

The arching sky bent down to meet,
On either mantling hill, the trees ;

Coquettish cloudlets stooped to greet
The foliage flirting with the breeze,
As listlessly I sauntered on.
The sun had drained the golden cup,
The shadows crept beneath their trees,
Apollo's steeds were slowing up
For th' Half-way House of Meridies,
While yet the glade seemed all my own.

Reflected from the drowsy pools,
Where laggard drops had stole to sleep,
Fond, rehabilitated souls
To transient resurrection creep
From caverns of the misty past.
Soft, dimpled cheeks and smiling eyes,
Fresh lips that glow to cling to mine,
Bosoms astir with yearning sighs,
Upon the limpid mirrors shine,
Too clear to doubt, too sweet to last.

There all the past and present meet,
There sweetheart, relative, and friend

Come trooping forth with noiseless feet.
Alas! to silent lapse again,
Again beyond the curtain glide.
Oh, blissful instant! But the sweep
Of current hurls my pools amain,
Shatters my mirrors, and the deep
Gorges and hides its own again,
To flow out with the seaward tide.

The canvas of my sentient soul
Absorbed the colors which the Muse
From flower, leaf, and cavern stole,
And blushed them back in myriad hues.
The memory-picture lingers still,
I'll try my unskilled pencil now;
If haply I can reproduce
Those scenes the Muse so long ago
Dashed on the canvas, live and loose,
That bright June day beside the mill.

ROOFLESS.



THE click-clack of the busy mill,
The buzzing bees along the hill;
The truant throstle's saucy call,
The shadows playing on the wall;
The foliage drowsing on the trees,
Scarce nodding to the lazy breeze;
The stillness of the long mill-race,
With noonday mirrored on its face,
In dimpled languor meets amain
The laughing parent stream again.

Across a shady, graveled path,
Foaming at times in swollen wrath;

But oceanward its even way,
Between its sylvan banks to-day,
Framed in with oak and elm and pine,
With blowing flower and clinging vine,
Sweeps the historic Brandywine.

Dimpling anon in broad sunshine,
The current hurls its lipping flocks
Lip-lipping 'gainst the stranded rocks,
And leaves some truant moisture there,
To mingle, sun-kissed, with the air.

The turmoil of the distant town—
As gently vague as thistle down
Falling upon its fragrant bed,
Where Autumn's gorgeous flowers shed
Their perfumed leaves—falls on my ears,
Like chorus chimes of bygone years,
Just startled in their heavy sleep
By wailing spirits of the deep,
And adds its solace to the balm
That lulls my spirit into calm:
My sympathizing senses feel
A fragrant midnight o'er them steal.

The far-off groaning of the bridge,
Which spans to either headlong ledge;
Moaning the burdened carts and drays

That rumble o'er its oak-ribbed ways,
 Sounds like the distant battle's roar
 That flushed the echoes years before
 Along Columbia's infant Rhine,
 Our own cliff-guarded Brandywine.
 Echoes that, whispering, linger still
 In every cavern, glen, and hill.
 Sooner the rocks shall, crumbling, mould,
 Than Freedom's echo-lips grow cold.

My drowsy senses soothed to rest,
 My lagging feet make no protest.
 Beneath an ancient sycamore,
 Whose roots extend to either shore
 Of sleeping race and lulling stream,
 I sink, at length, to muse and dream.
 Before me, like some giant forms,
 The mill-wheel whirls its Titan arms.
 The water pouring from the race,
 With noonday smiling on its face,
 Beneath each cruel, ponderous stroke
 Into a million fragments broke:

Some to flow out beyond the mill,
Others to chafe within the rill;
Some to speed on their seaward way,
Others lie beaten into spray,
Perchance to flow, at length, amain,
But nevermore be joined again.

Half-dreaming thus, I watch the mist
The wheel casts up, as it is kissed
By sunlight into rainbow hues
An instant hence it's doomed to lose;
And think how many drops arise
In that swift instant to the skies,
And wonder if, when turned to rain,
They'll find the Brandywine again;
Or fall upon the famished sand
Of Libyan heat in desert land;
Or leap into some stagnant pond
With sickly bulrush margined round;
Or drop into the tiny cup
The fragrant rose-bud reaches up,
And linger in their perfumed pen

Till drained by the fierce sun again,
Who'll shed the perfume from his breath
Athwart the world to baffle death.

Beside the valley tower and keep,
Whose portals mortals pass to sleep,
But never see the shadow-line,
Where sleep arms 'round their souls entwine;
Within this drowsy, outer gate
The laggard porter I await,
Wond'ring when he will turn the key
Within its noiseless wards for me.
How often have I lain awake
To see his form and hear the shake,
The rattle of his keys, before
He'd push me through the shadow-door!
But when he came or whither—well,
I never knew nor cared to tell;
Nor yet how long, nor where I'd been.
I only knew 'twas just within
The dim, mysterious realms of death,
Suspended by a trembling breath.

Thus, while I rather feel than hear
His muffled foot-falls on my ear,
His stealthy shadows o'er me stop,
I dream I am a water-drop.
Within some forest, dense and still,
I'm weeping from my mountain rill;
A myriad kindred drops with me
Begin the journey to the sea.
We know each other's murmur well,
As whispering on through mead and dell,
We kiss and chatter by the way
In cheerful commune night and day.
Now singing on through reedy ranks,
With flower carpet on our banks;
Answering the croaking roundelay
Of chorus frogs at close of day;
Wooing the stars from azure height
To sleep within our beds at night.

Now parting on some pebbly bed,
In the next sleeping pool to wed;
Now flashing back the glad sunlight,

Flowing as swift and smooth by night;
Now cooing to the turtle-dove
As she recalls her truant love;
Now answering to the whippoorwill
From many a little, laughing rill;
Now sighing faintly as the swain
Who finds his heart will heal again;
Now roaring as the thunders roll,
On fiery path from pole to pole;
Now dallying in some fragrant plain,
Then rushing madly on again;
With fever pulsing in our veins,
Swollen by rivulets of rains,
We tear-drops from the mountain rill
All know and love each other still.

And when, at every roster call,
We were all there—and yet not all,
For some were truant; some would climb
The rocks to slumber in sunshine;
And ere they could the fault atone
The sun would kiss them from the stone,

And woo them to him. Every day,
As we have loitered by the way
To sleep within a quiet pool
Beneath its banks perfumed and cool,
Some dairy-maid, with dimpled arms,
Would pause to contemplate her charms
Reflected from our silvery deep;
Then dip her pail, and we would weep
The myriad kindred parts she took
From the full chorus of our brook.
And when, again, some drooping steed
Would stoop to slake his thirsty greed,
We crystal drops beside the shore,
Would mourn, alas! for myriads more.

Again, becalmed beneath the rays
Of sunshine on long summer days,
The sun would woo full many a drop
By stealth into his azure cup.
Anon some muddy brook would leap
From roadside bed or loamy steep,
And trail its course along our way

Till we would wash it from its clay.
Or when the chilling frosts would come
We'd shingle in our cheery home,
And, smiling, look through crystal tiles
At suns, and moons, and stars by whiles.
We tear-drops from the mountain rill
Would know and love each other still;
Would ripple, laugh, and chatter on
From morn till night, from eve to dawn,
'Neath flowering tree and fruiting vine,
Until we joined the Brandywine.

Then, fretting on the bedded rocks,
We broke and parted into flocks;
Yet scarce a rod we'd run before
We're parted on a rock once more.
In vain our low, complaining moan!
The world must on though lives are lone.
Prisoned by dam of busy men,
We meet and part and meet again;
Shrink vainly from the maddened roar
Of comrades scarce a rod before;

Unwilling leap the headlong fall—
We were all there, but yet not all.
Each rooted rock within our way,
Each cascade lashing us to spray,
Parts us with a resistless tide,
And leaves new comrades by our side;
Till in this broader, deeper cup
Our drops seem lost and swallowed up.

But long ago there'd come to be
Another drop a part of me.
Hand joined in hand and lip to lip,
We'd waltz the rocks, the ripples skip.
Nerved by her pliant, clinging form,
I laughed the cascades' rage to scorn.
Through good and ill, through storm and shine,
This little drop was only mine.
Through all the clash and foam and shock
Of swift cascade and beetling rock;
Through all the laughing, crystal brood,
That coyly kissed or madly wooed;
Through all the mountain torrent's roll,

That stranded many a fickle soul,
This little, laughing drop would rest
In sweet content upon my breast.
And I had sworn the skies alone
Should win from me my cherished one.

Together through the grateful day
We'd cheer each other by the way;
Her darling form, so shapely slight,
Slept sweetly in my arms by night.
Together through the head-gates rude—
Like weeping sentinels they stood,
Where part the river and the race
With noonday mirrored on its face,
To pass some to delusive ease,
Whose comrades swept to open seas,
Dancing upon the loftiest tide,
Or hiding by the shoreward side—
We entered this delusive race,
With dimpled treachery on its face;
Lying becalmed for many a day,
We sweetly dreamed the hours away.

I kept my darling drop always
In shelter from the sun's fierce rays,
Or wantoning in some gravelly bed,
We'd count the nightly stars o'er head.
The path we slowly journeyed down
Was bright and smooth, though all unknown;
So free from rock, cascade, and ice,
I thought we were in Paradise.
At length, when many a day had flown,
So gently had we wandered on,
The current took a sudden leap,
And we, rushed onward with the sweep,
Were beaten into misty spray
By the mill-wheel's resistless play.
I fell upon a viscous stone,
My dearer self, alas! was gone.

Alone, alone! Oh, that I knew,
If in prismatic light she flew
To the warm welcome of the sun,
Or in the gloomy pool fell down!
I'll linger in some quiet spot,

Past where the widowed drops flow out;
 In cavern pool, no ray of light,
 I'd know her on the darkest night.
 Battered and bruised, she's dearer still
 Than all the drops within the rill.
 Perhaps she calls me, and her cry
 Is drowned in others' agony!
 If, when I've waited many a day,
 She comes not on her seaward way,
 I'll climb the loftiest stone upon
 And tempt the kisses of the sun.
 Better fly, seeking through the air
 Forever, than dwell widowed here.

While the slow porter I await,
 In dreamy languor by the gate
 That opens out of shadow-land,
 With death and life on either hand';
 Await the voice that bids me come,
 Like Lazarus, from my transient tomb,
 The brazen mouth of yonder bell
 Has wagged its iron tongue to tell

The toilers at the giddy loom
Another noontide hour has come ;
Where furlongs hence, beyond the bend,
Hundreds, in noisy factories penned,
Watch wearily the livelong day
The shuttle's never-varying play ;
The shelving rocks, with quick rebound,
In faithful echo, sound for sound,
Give back the footfalls on the lea
That rouse me from my revery.

The hurried footsteps pass me by,
And leave me thinking, with a sigh,
How shadowy, and yet how real,
This dream of mine. O I can feel
A fervid human sympathy
Between this water-drop and me !
Weeping, into the world we fell,
Whither or whence we could not tell ;
Faltered into our destined way,
Pushed onward, onward day by day ;
Now in the rush and joy of light,

Now in the hush and gloom of night;
 Now to the chiming of the bells,
 Now to the tolling of the knells;
 Now dancing over flowery mead,
 On childish feet, with headlong speed;
 Now resting in some shady place,
 Now speeding breathless on our race;
 Laughing, or murmuring, in distress,
 Or hope, or fear, or joyousness;
 Swept on by unseen current still,
 Like water dashing down the hill;
 Swept high upon some towering rock,
 And dashed asunder by the shock.

Our constant clashing with the rocks
 Parts us in unfamiliar flocks;
 The driftwood floats upon the top
 As fast as we who bear it up.
 Strive we with curses, prayers, or thanks,
 Our way is still between those banks;
 We keep together while we may,
 And weep together every day.

When, where, however we have gone,
Our course has been forever on;
Past reed, and rock, and waterfall,
We were all there—but yet not all.
At every roll-call, day by day,
Some wonted voice would be away.
New forms at every swelling tide
Would crowd and jostle by our side.
Some we would learn to love, and then
We'd look, lo! they were gone again.

Some boreas from his cavern cells
Would chill us into icicles;
Or summer's fiercest drouth burn up
The moisture in life's shallow cup.
Resting within some quiet nook,
Charmed by the music of the brook,
The fickle stream, with maddened roar,
Would rudely dash us on the shore.
Or if, perchance, we crouched beneath
The reach of winter's chilling breath,
The spring-tide, swollen by the rain,

Would hurl us, frothing mad, amain ;
 Where, dashed upon some frowning rock,
 We'd find, recovering from the shock,
 Our dear ones in the eddies still
 Who'd journeyed with us from the rill.
 While by the current we were borne,
 Resistlessly, forever on.

Swift waters lash the bedded rocks
 That stun us with their sullen shocks.
 In quiet, peaceful pools to rest
 Is but to stagnate at the best.
 Life, like the water, to be pure,
 Must unrecessed unrest endure.
 We may not keep the current still,
 Strive as we can, work as we will.
 Weeping beside an open grave,
 Some angry white-capped rolling wave
 Would bear us from our love's devotion,
 And madly sweep us toward the ocean.
 Till like the water-drop, we'd fain
 Another to our bosom strain ;

Hold it in fond embrace always,
In arms by night, in thought by day;
Till, lip to lip and heart to heart,
The final grand cascade we dart.

Or like the water-drop, my love
And I find rest in peaceful cove;
Hear from afar the strife and toil,
The world's continual turmoil;
To pass, at length, the head-gates rude,
That weeping sentries long have stood.
Together the deceptive race,
With noonday dimpling on its face,
We enter. It's so clear of ice,
We fondly deem it paradise.
A dream, alas! We wake to feel
The cruel crushing of the wheel;
Whence one flows out beyond the mill,
The other lingers in the rill,
Perchance to flow, at length, amain,
But never to be joined again;

Or rising up in spray and mist,
Is into instant sunshine kissed.

As thus I muse the hour passes,
The lithesome feet of lads and lasses,
Mixed with the sturdier tread of men,
Are sounding on the path again.
The wide-mouthed bell with iron tongue
Urges the lagging feet along.
While the swift duets hasten by,
Many a maiden, with a sigh,
Glances across the fretted tide
That foams in fury by her side
(For there had been a summer shower
Some miles above within the hour),
Buffets a rock and leaps so high,
It seems to meet the arching sky;
Then sinks in its abortive wrath,
Again upon its bouldered path.
The tender maid would sigh and say,
“Elvandine mourns Ural to-day;”

Or, paling through her healthy bloom,
“Elvandine weeps at Ural’s tomb.”

One little maid behind the rest,
Her lagging feet, rebellious, pressed
Toward loom and shuttles’ restless play;
Her thoughts were otherwheres to-day.
“Pray tell me, pretty one,” I said,
“Why maids such sorrowing tribute shed;
And why, with swelling sigh, they say,
‘Elvandine mourns Ural to day’?”
The eyes that brighter glances sent,
In token of the compliment,
Took on a look of sudden gloom,
As eyes that rest upon a tomb.
Then stealing, silent, to my side,
She pointed o’er the maddened tide,
Clasped her small hands an instant there,
And climbed to heaven in childish prayer.
Then in her faltering accents said,
“Elvandine weeps by Ural’s bed.

"The stream has risen a foot or more
 Since we passed down an hour before,
 And when it rises thus we know
 Elvandine's tears for Ural flow ;
 And coursing down the grave's green side,
 They join the stream and swell the tide.
 The story," said she through her tears,
 "Is dated back beyond my years.
 But even tottering infancy,
 Clapping its hands in careless glee,
 Is taught to lisp brave Ural's name,
 To reverence the weeping dame.
 Elvandine is the maid who loved
 This Ural Regneigh, and he proved
 His love for her by meeting death,
 Her dear name on his latest breath.
 And though he loved her long and well,
 His love he never dared to tell.

"Some cruel fate, the people said,
 Barred them from ever being wed ;
 But ere he died he made request

His body might be laid to rest
Beneath the arching elms where first
Her beauty on his vision burst.
He's slept there now for many years,
'Neath sod that's watered by her tears :
For every morn and eventide
You'll find her praying by his side.
They say his spirit talks with her
For hours when they're together there.
On moonlit nights the Brandywine
Is thronged with pilgrims to the shrine.
And lovers always, ere they wed,
Join hands across his lowly bed ;
Then lift their eyes to heaven and say,
'Lord make us true as he, we pray.'


"In yonder mansion where the trees
Coquet with every whispering breeze,
Among the rocks that grow so high
They seem to me to pierce the sky,
Our saintly, sad Elvandine lives,
Her life to prayer and Ural gives.

We know whene'er the river sweeps
 In swollen majesty, she weeps.
 And hence you heard the maidens say,
 'Elvandine mourns Ural to-day.'
 And now sir, that is all I know;
 The bell has ceased, and I must go.
 A mile above, in grateful shade,
 You'll see where Ural's dust is laid.
 To find it is an easy task,
 You need not choose of whom you ask;
 The veriest churl upon the banks
 Will tell you, without boon or thanks,
 The shady spot where Ural sleeps,
 The sacred dust Elvandine weeps."

The maid was flitting up the path,
 The river foaming in its wrath.
 The shadows, resting at their ease
 Their nooning hour, beneath the trees
 Had stretched themselves, and forced the pace
 Toward the river and the race.
 The blushing little maid was gone,

And I was left again alone,
Walking along the silent race
That led toward Ural's resting-place.
The maid was right. I straightway found
My mission made enchanted ground.
The rudest teamster hid a sigh,
And showed, with moisture in his eye,
The nearest pathway up the glen
To Ural's resting-place; and then
He added with a reverent thrill,
"His father dwells beyond the mill."

A furlong thence, mid elm and oak,
The cottage on my vision broke.
It drowsed upon a sunny knoll
In evening glory; while the roll
And plash of silvery cascade,
With distant hum of shuttle, made
A concord of discordant charms
That wrapped it, dozing, in its arms.
Before it stretched a grassy lawn
Down to the margin of a pond.



Behind it, on the rising ground,
The slope with orchard trees was crowned :
Some in fruition full, and some,
In many-hued and fragrant bloom,
Outlined against the summer sky
In rare and gorgeous panoply.


Beneath a rustic portico,
O'er which the roses climb and blow,
Breathing their fragrance from each vine
Round which their blushing arms entwine ;
Reclining in a wooden chair,
Mingling with perfumes on the air
The odor of a meerschaum pipe,
By years of service colored ripe,
The aged owner bless'd my view,—
The father of Ural the true.
While only half resolved I wait,
He met me at the wicket-gate.
His was a form years could not bend,
A grace not culture's self could lend ;

An eye that showed the youthful fire
Could burn when fanned by righteous ire.
With sturdy step, though grave and slow,
He led me to the portico.
Placing a chair beside his own,
He kindly bade me to sit down.
Mute witnesses on every hand
With one accord proclaimed the man :
His mastiff whined caressingly,
His cat purred gently at his knee,
Till, answered by his kindly face,
They sought again their wonted place ;
Both stretched upon the same bright rug,
Lightly embraced in listless hug.
Instinctively I felt and saw
Order was his, as heaven's first law :
Beside him on the table lay
The city papers of the day ;
On them, for usage, open next,
His Bible marked at many a text ;
His spectacles, a pruning-knife,
A picture of his buried wife ;

Two larger portraits, side by side,
With a sad beauty glorified.

I knew we ne'er before had met,
Not many words were spoke, and yet
There was in his society
Some subtle, homely charm for me.
A voice called down the far away,
"Your souls have met before to-day."
When haltingly I touched upon
My tender interest in his son,
He pointed to the portrait there—
His lips and eyes in silent prayer.
"Pardon a father's tears," he said;
"In tribute to his love they're shed.
He was my first-born and my pride,
But never for his death I've cried.
My years are gliding fast away,
And we shall meet some early day;
Threescore and ten have seamed my brow,
I'm waiting for the roll-call now."

I could not speak. I stood half dazed,
As on the pictured face I gazed.
I knew it well, for years before
I'd heard a temperance orator ;
Within the city's public square,
I stood among the thousands there
One sunny Sunday afternoon,
Enchanted by that wondrous tune
Inspired eloquence can thrill
Through hearts that thaw and eyes that fill
Beneath the master's subtle hand,
The wierd magician's potent wand.
The very foliage in the square
Swayed whisperingly, as though in prayer.
I, with the charmed, enchanted crowd,
Had laughed, and wept, and prayed, and vowed ;
Was weeping, praying, vowing still,
Responsive to the master's will.
I never knew how long we staid ;
I only knew the sun had made
His journey from the meridies,
Adown behind the western trees.



It scarcely seemed a half-hour then ;
 I looked and he was gone, and when
 We asked each other whom the gods
 Had freighted with such burning words.
 Nobody knew. The chairman spoke :
 "The expected orator had broke
 His promise, and when he arose,
 To call the meeting to a close,
 This fair-faced stranger, with a smile,
 Had craven leave to speak awhile.
 But whence he came, or whither fled,
 He knew no more than know the dead."
 He vanished, even as he came,
 And no one ever knew his name.
 In all the past, before or since,
 I've never heard such eloquence.

Though many years had whirled away
 Since that eventful summer day,
 I knew each noble feature there ;
 The very lock of wavy hair,
 That from the marble brow would sweep

Athwart his eyes, and would not keep
Its place beside its curling peers—
Not one was changed in all these years.
The stalwart limbs, the shoulders square,
The tapered hands stand outlined there,
As fresh before my mind to-day
As though not miles and years away.
There, too, the firm and pearly teeth
Smile out behind their auburn wreath;
Again the impassioned torrent flows,
Again the bubbling wine-cup's woes;
Again the quick, commanding nod,
The gestures of a regnant god,
In swift review before me passed;
I sighed aloud and said, "At last!"
Then silent, bared my reverent head
Before the pictured genius, dead.

Jove lighted his own fire one day,
Then threw the tinder spark away,—
Lo! through the firmament afar,
Flashed genius, like an errant star.

But it was an erratic light,
 More like a meteor in the night,
 That burns its way across the skies,
 To disappear from dazzled eyes,
 Falls headlong through the startled air
 To planet home—no one knows where.
 For genius treads on crumbling edge,
 The dizzy precipice's ledge.
 Upon one hand is common-sense,
 And sinew strained, and muscle tense;
 The other, vague inanity,
 And bedlamite insanity.
 On the one hand a level plane,
 Men sowing seeds to reap again;
 The other, sunk so far below
 That mindful senses dizzy grow,
 Are beings with their brain erase,
 And fever fitted in its place.

What wonder that the frowning height,
 Between the darkness and the light;
 The meagre margin width, the line

To which he must his feet confine ;
The crumbling of the treacherous ledge
Upon the precipice's edge,
Topple his balance and he fall
Headlong adown the serried wall,
Among the hosts of maddened men,
Who know and hail him brother, then !

Talent's the engine's toil and dash ;
Genius the electric fluid's flash.
Though genius spent his life in school,
He'd never learn to heed a rule ;
Ages of cruel punishments
Would never teach him common-sense.
Like truant boy for flogging stripped,
It only hurts while being whipped ;
And though repeating o'er and o'er
" I'll never do so any more,"
When once he gets his jacket on,
The memory, with the pain, has gone.

Through all the haunts of busy men,

I'd sought that wondrous voice again ;
The forum, stage, bar, altar-rail,
I'd scrutinized without avail.
And now, when years had come and gone,
The gifted soul, alas ! had flown,
To swell, with souls of kindred fire,
Anthems in their angelic choir.
Such glowing genius is but lent
To earth for brief and fierce torment
Within affliction's furnace, where
The melting dross leaves spirit bare,
Unclogged, untrammeled, plumed for flight,
To planes of native, nightless light.
What though the loathsome snail and worm
Dine richly on the fresh young form !
The worm that preyed upon his heart
Is not of his new life a part.

Turning I met the father's look,
My voice was tearful as I spoke,
And told, in accents brief and low,
That story of the long ago.

Before its course was half-way run,
The unseen hand of his dead son
Had joined our hearts in fellowship;
Our hands met in that lingering grip,
Which thrills so silently, so well,
The story words can never tell,
Faltering upon the bated breath,
The faithful promise, "Yours till death."
I've known magnetic bars to lay
On the same plane for many a day.
Let but the ends together meet,
At once the circuit is complete,
And all earth's hidden powers pour
Throughout their length forevermore.
So let but two such surcharged hearts
Be joined by hands, the current starts;
All heaven's surging love beneath
Proclaims the promise, "Yours till death."

There are such promises that leap
From lip alone. The early sweep
Of fortune's frown or slander's breath

Dooms them to an untimely death.
 Hands meet across the festal board,
 Lips pledge amid the careless horde ;
 Hands clasp upon the nuptial bond,
 Lips mutter the responses fond ;
 Hands meet above the coffined clay
 Whose life their lips have sworn away ;
 Hands shatter every sacred trust,
 Lips impious murmur "Dust to dust."
 In every age, in every clime,
 In summer, autumn, winter time,
 This sacred pledge is but a jest,
 Of pleasing sound all meaningless ;
 A trill that not outlasts its breath—
 A careless byword, "Yours till death."

The sun was diving from the skies,
 When courtesy prompted me to rise,
 And bid a brief and fond good-by :
 I spoke the words with moistened eye.
 "Nay, nay, young friend, you've won my heart,
 I cannot see you yet depart.

Stay, sup and sleep with me to-night,
And when the morning fresh and bright,
Has quaffed the dew-drops from the trees,
To cool the wings of noonday's breeze,
I'll speed you with my blessing then
Into the marts of busy men.
To-night, on eve of gathering gloom,
We'll seek together Ural's tomb;
You'll weep with me above his bed,
I'll pray for blessings on your head."
The patriarch pleaded; my consent
Was won ere yet the plea was spent.

At eve, ere heaven's lampadrome,
With her ten million lampads, shone
Along the gorgeous galaxy,
Throughout the azure canopy,
We stood without the open door,
With blushing fragrance trellised o'er;
He reaching for his trusty cane,
To aid him on the rocky lane,
And I, with youthful vision keen,

Piercing the woodland's leafy screen,
Beheld a milk-white courser there,
That skimmed the earth like thing of air;
While floating out upon the wind
A lady's habit streamed behind.
Threading the serpentining ways,
That lie contiguous to the race,
The phantom steed, as if it flew,
Bore its fair burden into view.

The patriarch glanced beyond the gate
As one who'd read some scroll of fate.
"I have delayed," at length he quoth,
"Our pilgrimage, for I was loath
To trench upon Elvandine's time
For prayer and tears at Ural's shrine.
When the first whippoorwill shall wail
His plaintive notes, and swiftly sail
Athwart the curtaining of gloom,
She'll gallop here from Ural's tomb.
She always halts to say good-night
Just in the closing eye of light.

I hear the footfalls of her steed
Reverbing from the flowery mead,
Like muffled beat of spirit drums,
And here across the lawn she comes."

She looked, while speeding up the course,
Pale Venus on Death's paler horse.
His ironed hoofs upon the sod,
Scarce leaving imprint where he trod,
Responsive to her wishes fell
Softly as snowflakes on the dell.
So swift this spectral rider came,
Along the soft moss-muffled lane,
She might have been a fleet-winged bird,
For all the shock or sound she stirred.
The white steed slowed across the lawn
As gracefully as lopes the fawn,
Lightly as bounds the wild gazelle;
Centaur ne'er sat his steed so well,
As Elvandine this fiery thing.
He cleared the fence and stood within,

Rubbing his nose caressingly
Against the patriarch's sturdy knee.

Elvandine's voice was sweet and low,
Echoing love's dead passion-flow,
As bending down her lips to press
The brow upreached for her caress,
She said, "Dear father, one more day
Has crept from earth toward him away.
So slow the freighted hours creep,
And, oh, the pathway is so steep!
I wonder whether you or I
Shall meet him first beyond the sky?
I wonder yet how many years
I must float off of time in tears?
My bark ought now to sail the wave
Of those I've wept upon his grave."

Like angel-chorus steeped in tears,
Her accents ravished willing ears,
And laid a spell of holy rest
On all the passions of my breast,

Hushed into sweet tranquillity
By that divine dulciloquy.
My reverent longing could not brook,
My eyes could but consent to look
On this fair thing whose life was given .
To Ural and her hopes of heaven.
Before, at courtesy's regnant sway,
I merely glanced, then looked away.
I glanced again and turned, and then
My eyes drank up her face again.
With every fervent, chastened glance
I felt I was in deeper trance ;
And till my dying day I'll feel
She was a dream and all else real.

Pictures lie hid in many a heart,
Perfect, complete in every part,
That not the master's subtile skill
Can summon forth and fix at will.
Nor can I paint her picture here ;
I know her eyes were black and clear,
I know her face was pale and round,

Her raven tresses all unbound.
 Each lip was passion's chastened pole,
 Her teeth were white as palmer's stole;
 Upon her cheek, from exercise,
 Was faintest tint of sunset skies.
 A suffering look, resigned and chaste,
 Like veil of novice, draped her face.
 Reluctant health was in her mien,
 But, oh, so wearily serene;
 So tired and patient were her tones,
 They sounded as might angels' moans.

The patriarch's voice, so strong and kind,
 Fell on my ears as welcome wind
 Falls on the sails of ships becalmed
 A thousand miles away from land:
 "Let me present you, Elvandine,
 To this to-day-found friend of mine.
 A tearful pilgrim he will be,
 To-night, at Ural's shrine with me."
 The weary look was changed as swift
 As landscape when the cloud is cleft,

And sudden stream of ruddy light
Floods it with beauty soft and bright.
She proffered me a cordial hand,
Without a ring or bracelet spanned,
And welcome glistened in her eyes,
That gleamed like lakes in Paradise.

Slowly and haltingly I said,
"My interest in the genius dead
Emboldens me to make request,
Of her he loved on earth the best,
For some brief history of the love
Too pure for earth—but now, above,
With all heaven's loveliness in view,
Turns in its loyalty to you."
She flushed; the rose's sweet perfume
Hung trembling on the evening gloom,
And seemed to sway, as though 'twere stirred,
In fragrant echo to each word:
"Come, sir, to-morrow evening, when
The sinking sun departs the glen,
To where my lordly lover sleeps,

Where the sad, crooning river weeps
And wails forever by his bed—
Father, you'll come with him," she said.
"It rests my heart to tire my tongue
In Ural's praises deep and long.
Nay, gentle father, have no fears,
My tale shall fall on loving ears;
My heart has judged the youth aright—
The dew falls densely, so good-night.
Eidolon, plume your grateful wings
Toward yonder tower's beaconings."

The faithful steed pricks up his ears
Stretches his neck, the picket clears
With easy bound; and then away,
Bears his receding gleam of day
Through the descending shades of night,
As darkness pierced by beam of light.
Striking the fire from steely toes,
A halo flash of sparks he throws
Along the dark and rocky lane—
Then all is still and dark again.

The patriarch's eye was bent upon
The mansion built of dark-veined stone,
Among the crags so rude and still,
High up on that steep, frowning hill.
A light in upper window flashed,
He breathed again and said, "At last
She's safe within her room once more.
God bless and take her home before
The light of reason, waning low,
In this fierce draught tempt her to go."

Arm clasped in arm we paced the graveled way,
'Mongst flower-flung kisses from each fragrant bed.
Brushing the dew that fell with dying day,
The patriarch paused beside the door and said:

"The dew falls heavily. Elvandine was right;
Alas! fate's noxious vapors all about her curl,
And Erebus hangs out the veil of night,
Anon to curtain in a sleeping world.

“Shall we not kindly share the hours of even’,
 In sweet communion in my cottage here,
 Till bedtime comes; then lift our souls to heaven
 Upon the mutual wings of faith and prayer:

“Since you have plighted faith with her to be
 At Ural’s tear-moist grave to-morrow even’,
 To learn his melancholy history
 From her to whom his restless soul was given:

“From lips—his love was such a sacred thing—
 He never touched till death had palsied his,
 And fluttering spirits were abroad awing,
 To float him hence upon that vestal kiss?

“The broad-faced moon will soon come smiling up
 Behind yon hill-tops outlined in the gloom;
 Then will the maids, and swains, and pilgrims group
 Around their Mecca-shrine of Ural’s tomb.

“I’d not disturb them; for they’d stand away
 In pitying reverence, head bowed down and bare,

Lips moving dumbly as they silent pray,
In token of my rightful presence there.

“What say you, then? Shall we perforce adjourn
To yonder eastern-facing oriel?
Backward the leaves in memory’s ledger turn,—
These, halting, pass; there, yearning, longer dwell?”

“I will revive lost Ural’s earlier years,
As recollection shall uncoil the scroll,
Until fate flooded her dear life with tears,
Sweet sister to his brave and suffering soul.

“But from the hour their loving hearts embrace,
When pours the Brandywine his funeral hymn,
Hers be the loving task each step to trace,
The privilege each hallowed scene to limn.”

Ere this we’d reached the trellised oriel porch,
Vine-clad and fragrant with a thousand scents;
Anon the glow-worm flashed her passion torch,
To light her lover through the foliage dense.

Rolling two-armed wicker chairs across
The vista heralding the arch of blue,
He looped in wild festoon the climbing rose,
That with its fragrant foliage hid the view.

There seated in the silence, side by side,
Our hands together joined across the chairs,
Our thoughts unfettered 'mongst the planets glide,
And climb in sympathy beyond the stars.

The Brandywine was chafing on the rocks,
In its impatient haste to reach the sea,
The katydids were chirruping in flocks,
The night owl hooting in his lonely tree.

The whippoorwill was grieving for his mate,
The watch-dog's echo multiplied itself
Among the rocks, like the decrees of fate,
A thousand times on every mantling shelf.

The flickering lamps throughout the adjacent town,
In sluggish undulation glow and hide,

.

Upon the hazy atmosphere around,
Like Charon's lights upon the Stygian tide.

Myriads of fire-flies on the foliage met,
Greeting, released their prisoned rays of light,
That flash like diamonds in emerald set,
Among the ebon tresses of the night.

While muffled sound with solemn silence meets,
Zephyrs come wantoning from orchard trees,
Intent on bartering their stolen sweets
With whispering roses in the lattices.

I sat with every sense of soul enchained,
Oblivious of the patriarch's presence, when
He pressed my palm, and starting up, exclaimed,
"Luna is ready for the road again!

"See how she plashes from the main,
As loath to leave her ocean-bath;
Clutches a cloud, springs up again,
And scuds along the azure path.

“Now as she skims yon hillock top,
 See how she wipes her smiling face,
 And careless, flings aside the mop—
 A cloud caught in her breathless chase.

“A half-hour hence her pendent rays,
 In silvery esture on the grass,
 Will etch through every open space
 The umbrage by the sleeping race.

“Then on the pebbled path you’ll hear,
 Intent upon their pilgrimage,
 The tread of myriads far and near,
 The mingled tones of youth and age.

“They go to register a vow,
 To strew fresh roses round the tomb,
 Perchance to drop a tear or two
 Among the dewy sweets of June.

“While they are sauntering along
 The moonlit path beside the race,

Let us, in fancy, backward run,
Backward the road of life retrace.

“Fancy can wet her finger-tips,
Swirl back the indexed leaves of time,
Through daisied fields of childhood skip,
But, ah! the body lags behind.”



PAUL REGNEIGH'S ALLEGORY.

In fancy let us mount the train,
In fancy raise the lever bar,
In fancy speed us back again
To youth in this old rumbling car.

In fancy here's the junction now,
Reverse the engine, clear the track;
Let the bell ring, the whistle blow,
We're ready for the journey back.

As we speed on past changing scenes,
I'll strive to tell you what I see,
That, real once, long since has been
A wearied ghost of memory.

So clasp my hand with closer grip,
When skirting by the sunken mounds
Of the dead past, lest I should trip
And sink into the burrowed grounds.

Now ring the bell, the whistle blow,
Pull out the lever wide and free;
As down the grade we racing go
I'll try to tell you what I see:

Time, half a century ago,
In latitude far south of this,
When I was, haply, young as you,
I see a bower of wedded bliss.

I see a pair of timid eyes,
That droop beneath my burning gaze;
I hear a host of stifled sighs,
A fragrant breath floats o'er my face.

I feel my pulses start and thrill,
Like lute strings struck upon the wind,

I feel my heart beat fast, but still
Another's faster beats on mine.

I feel my lips drink up her sighs,
Until my giddy senses reel,
Drunken with maddening ecstasies,
Enthralled by love's sweet wizard spell.

Hush! holy reverence, while I push
This aspening curtain by my side;
See! wrapped in coyly tingling flush,
This happy creature,—my new bride.

Draw out the lever, let us go
Careering through these happy years;
Like time, we'll let the engine slow
When wheeling through the vale of tears.

Now panting through the happy days,
Without a shade of pain or care,
We meet the rising sun with praise,
And greet the gloom of night with prayer.

Anon the tortured engine groans,
 Strewing its sparks like fiery tears,
Where sway the shivering mile-stones,
 As monuments to fleeting years.

Now we are rattling through the vale,
 With harvest promise ripening fast ;
The golden heads await the flail,
 The hopper, and the burrs at last.

Here by the church-yard's tablet stones,
 We scarcely pause, farewell to say
To loved ones gone ; the engine groans,
 And bears us, weeping, fast away.

The tears that fall for fallen friend,
 Draw us together firmer, nearer ;
Our faltering prayers to heaven ascend,
 To prove earth's ties to us are dearer.

For each new swath that falls beneath
 The scythe of the chill-handed mower,

Nears us to the front ranks, for death
To reap, and then to trample o'er.

Joy sweeps along no royal road,
The rough-cast tracks wear out the tires;
The engine groans before the load,
And flooding tear-storms quench the fires.

But there are stations, here and there,
Along life's narrow, rocky route,
Where we would gladly linger, where
We'd wish the fires were clean gone out.

Where we could wish time as it flies
Would pass us as the rushing wind;
In this stray nook of Paradise
Leave our contented souls behind.

But, ah, 'tis never, never so.
Time rushes with a frenzied haste
When joy's our guest; but oh, so slow,
When anguish kills and sorrows waste.

Ah! slow the engine, bank the fires,
Close up the valve, depress the lever,
Rest up the heated, smoking tires,
Memory could riot here forever.

See yonder room? One autumn eve
We entered it; the herald morn,
With sunlight flashing on his sleeve,
Proclaimed, "Behold, a man is born!"

Joys on the wings of morning rise
For us supremely happy creatures;
I loved him for his mother's eyes,
She for his father's plainer features.

The days like mountain brooklets flow,
In singing, sweet endeavor;
But, ah! again the engine slow,
Again depress the lever.

Another spot to memory dear,
To recollection holy,—

Our Ural found a sister here;
Now let the train move slowly.

We were in happiness complete,
Scarce shade of cares or troubles;
We had ourselves in commune sweet,
And—and we had our doubles.

We four were all the world there was,
For us the sun was shining;
The clouds, for others dark, for us
Were gilt with silver lining.

Each morning heaven would bless us all,
For we would claim its blessing,
And ere the noxious vapors fall,
We'd kiss good-night, caressing.

But see! our engine gulps the years,
To breathe them forth condensing,
And strews the track with fiery tears—
The grade's at last commencing.

Alas! we feel the coming night
By lengthening shadows o'er us;
They're shrinking from the source of light,
As we from night before us.

Life has its duties, cares, and fears,
That laugh at future curing;
The load that's heavy now, in years
Would be beyond enduring.

Slow up the train, the gathering gloom
Of one dear form has reft us;
Stern duty's summons seems too soon,—
Ural for school has left us.

How heavy wanes the laboring day,
When first from home-group taking,
Absence or death lures one away,
And leaves our heart-voids aching.

Absence or death! It little recks,
An hour meter fills it;

The one we meet this year or next,
The other when God wills it.

Absence is death, nor hope secured,
As shifting sands, uncertain ;
Death is but absence long endured—
Faith sweeps aside the curtain.

The perfect earthly cord is gone ;
For once let distance sever
The hands of those whose hearts are one,
And time can join them never.

The train may bear them back again,
Embracing and caressing ;
The chain of love as bright, but then
One little link is missing.

How sadly wanes the laboring day,
When first from home-group taking,
Absence a loved one lures away,
From other heart-voids aching.

A transient knock upon the door
Is harbinger of sorrow ;
The messenger who comes before
The dear one dead to-morrow.

The watch-dog baying at the moon,
The solemn night owl praying,
Are omens of the pall, the tomb,
The noonday reaper's slaying.

But time will go and man can wait
For sorrows coming, surely
'Twill not reduce the bills of fate
To meet them prematurely.

See how the train screams gladly on,
No sign of griefs or mourners ;
It's bringing Ural bravely home,
Weighed down with college honors.

He comes with love-light on his face,
With love-dew on his lashes,

A few brief days of fond embrace,
Then love with duty clashes.

His heart, all ours, turned to the world;
Ambition's beacon o'er him
Allured to heights where fame unfurled
Her pennants high before him.

A lawyer's life, a statesman's fame,
Fired him with emulation;
Proudly he said, "Your honored name
Shall ring throughout the nation."

Drive slowly here, the grade is steep,
The track is wet and slipping;
Our eyes are heavy, not with sleep,
But tears of anguish dripping.

With tears divinely, sadly sweet,
From heart benumbed with sorrow—
The muffled tread of heavy feet
Will enter here to-morrow.

For yonder, sleeping calmly, see,
With death's mask on them moulded,
Two pulseless hearts—that throbbed for me—
Dumb hands across them folded.

With eyes that speak not back again,
Lips that return no token
To clinging kiss that pleads in vain;
To voice in anguish broken.

They sleep like two expectant brides,
To happy bridegroom given;
They floated off on evening tides,
The Bridegroom met in heaven.

The pestilence, with baleful breath,
Breathed on my tender flowers
At sunset, and they walked with death
Before the morning hours.

Ah, yes! the grade is steep, the track
With tears is wet and slipping,

Though sands of time for years aback
Have on the rails been dripping.

The route has lain through slopes of tears,
With sorrow's clouds to shade it;
Though Time has dialed but ten years,
Sorrow has hundreds made it.

Yes, yes! the grade is slow and steep,
But still the granules, dripping
From Time's old sand-box, serve to keep
The wheels from backward slipping.

I thought my bitter cup was full,
And now surcease of sorrow
Would come, as grief's fresh edges dull,
With each new coming morrow.

But ah! such happiness as ours
For envious fates is target;
They strip my garden of its flowers,
And leave dead stems to mark it.

Now lowers there so dark a cloud,
Thick as the fates can weave it;
So palpable the sombre shroud,
The engine scarce can cleave it.



But see! the midnight moon rides zenithward
And wooes the obedient tide to turn and rest.
Hie we to sleep, our souls trained heavenward,
Angelic fingers on our eyelids pressed.



THE AUTHOR'S STORY.

My chamber faced the eastern porch,
Useless were taper, lamp, or torch;
The moon and myriad stars that shine,
Reflected from the Brandywine,
Through vistas in each leafy tree
Filled all my room so I could see
To read—so brightly flash and gleam
Heaven's torches from the dimpling stream.
The tracery of the fondling vines,
Every coy tendril stem that twines,
Were outlined on the whited wall,
And swaying with the rise and fall,
The undulations of the river,
The zephyrs that are swaying ever.

The perfumes sleeping on the wind,
So mixed, and mingled, and refined
By the night dew that bore them down,
Held them sweet captives all his own,
Filled all the space throughout my room
With myriad sweets in one perfume,
And lured me through the shadow-door
To sleep-land's shadow-peopled shore,
Where Morpheus lulls me in his arms,
Entranced by all these subtile charms.
With the new dawning I awake
As heaven's tardiest torches take
Their leave, and mingled light and gray
Streaking the orient herald day.

Oh, you who never see the sun
When his new day has just begun,
On hill-tops of the Brandywine,
Go watch him bursting from the brine.
Behold him stirring, see him shed
The dun-cloud drapery of his bed;
Note the red print of pages' hand,

Who dutifully by him stand,
Strip off the fleecy coverlets
He wraps about him when he sets.
Then see him vaulting up the east,
Of all his rosy drapes divest,
Making his beams in gladness quiver
Upon the wimpling race and river.

The dozing flowers in their beds
Awake and turn to him their heads;
The dew-drops vanish from the trees,
In mockery of the thirsty breeze.
His face in white combustion burns,
As clouds and fogs and mists he spurns;
Behold him free the scents that night
Held prisoned, while the breezes light
Come forth from every rippling lake
At his command, Awake! awake!
And bear to poverty and wealth
The rosy boon of ruddy health.
The baleful vapors hide their heads
In cavern damps and marshy beds.

Then see the shadows of the trees!
Gigantic from a night of ease,
They've sped across the Brandywine,
High up the western slope to climb:
See how they draw their wrinkled face
Back, inch by inch, toward the base.
Like some unwilling foe they seem
Reluctant to recross the stream.
They tarry at the silent race,
Then breathlessly each other chase,
Running in panting rivalry
Back toward their base of rock or tree;
Of breathing flower and clinging vine
Along the chanting Brandywine.

The birds were saying matin prayers;
A tempered step falls on the stairs,
And calls me from my revery.
The Patriarch says "Good-morn" to me.
"Thank heaven for another day,
We're free to spend it as we may;

But let us kneel and thank His grace
For lengthening out our thankless days.
When you have thus perfumed your mind,
A bath in yonder room you'll find ;
Your prayer, your bath, your morning text—
Your breakfast will await you next."

I see him at the table stand,
With downcast eyes, uplifted hand,
Returning thanks for mercies given,
For hold on life and hope of heaven ;
Asking a blessing of the Lord
On viands spread upon the board ;
And adding, as he closed his prayer,
With pleading voice and reverent air,
Unlike the noisy one who'd pray
As though his God was far away :
"Oh, bless and save degraded man,
And if consistent mercy can
Reach aught, indeed, that's so inhuman,
Reclaim and save the wayward woman."

His words of public prayer were few,
They tired not heaven and listener too.
That prayer is apt to be the best,
Prayed to the Lord, not at the guest.
The prayer our Lord and Saviour taught
Is full of calm rebuke, and fraught
With chiding to the Pharisee,
Who stands, with broad phylactery,
Praying aloud in words profuse—
As courier who proclaims the news—
In half-hour speech, rehearsed and planned,
Embracing sea, and air, and land;
Peeps with one eye and all his sense
For tributes to his eloquence.

The prayer our All-wise Lord ordained
Scarce threescore words and ten contained;
While Peter, sinking in the sea,
Had but three words, "Lord, rescue me!"
"Remember me!" the dying thief
Besought in accent low and brief.
The gracious, instant answer given:

"This day thou'lt be with me in heaven."
Go, caviller, raise your heavy eyes:
"He said not heaven, but Paradise!"
He said "This day thou'lt be with me."
Beyond these pangs, from torment free,
The Christian wants no better heaven
Than with his Lord, redeemed, forgiven.

Know you who sometimes preach for fame,
And in learned words oft mock his name;
Know you the shortest catechism,
So brief it has no room for schism,
Founded on such a solid rock,
Nor earth, nor hell can move or shock;
And yet so broad a world can stand
On it, and touch the promised land,
And step across? Know you, indeed,
The Christian's universal creed?
Simple, complete, bound up in three
Short yearning words, "Lovest thou me?"
The tender question is the Lord's,
You need not answer it in words.

His cheerful converse all the while
Lured many a mirth-recording smile,
Assured digestion to the food ;
Made heaven's boons seem doubly good.
Breakfast dispatched, he sought his pipe,
By years of usage colored ripe ;
Cleaning the bowl and stem the while,
Demurely saying, with a smile,
That seemed to play at hide and seek,
Rather in eye than lip or cheek,
"If tobacco be a curse, indeed,
And mischief lurk within the weed,
Why, then, I think I'll fill this cup,
And do my share to burn it up."

And when his carriage at the gates
Our leisured preparation waits,
We skirt the flower-dotted sward,
And soon are rolling cityward.
Much as the swimmer dives beneath
The surface, then comes up for breath,
To find the air far sweeter when

He breathes it with free lungs again,
So dearer far is home's repose,
Compared with marts and strifes and shows.
A cheerful call at store and post,
Consumed, perhaps, two hours at most;
So morning moments blithely fled
On entertainment's pinions sped.

The brazen mouth of yonder bell
Had found its iron tongue to tell
The toilers at the giddy loom
Another noontide hour had come.
Anon the noonday meal is done,
The sun no longer shines upon
The eastern-facing portico,
O'er which the roses climb and blow;
But now their heads, somnolently,
Nod to the scarce, belated bee.
We seek its grateful shade to talk,
While hastening feet sound on the walk,
Returning to their toil once more,
Amid machinery's clash and roar.

Th' imperious bell had ceased to call,
And silence like a silvery pall,
Sheened with the rays of noonday sun,
Fell river, race, and slope upon.
The chipping of the quarryman
On the great rocks which nature's plan
Had planted, subject to his drills,
Beneath the everlasting hills;
The buzzing of the drowsy bee
Beguiled me into revery.
And all the past floats drifting by
Where, shadowed, I day-dreaming lie,
As mariner from stormy tide
Dreams sweetly on some shoreward side.

Oh, shoreward side! dear shoreward side!
How, rocked upon your lulling tide,
The past comes trooping back to me
From all the naves of memory.
Again upon some mossy mound
With April's dogwood blossoms crowned;
The daisies nodding on the heath,

The violet breathing sweet beneath ;
The honeysuckle's dewy cup
Its fragrant incense off'ring up ;
The merry brooklet's laughing call,
The springtide languor over all ;
The sunlight sifting through the trees,
As fitful as the April breeze.

Again a mother's tones I hear,
A father's voice falls on my ear ;
I feel the touch of sister's lip,
A brother's cordial hand I grip ;
A sweetheart's voice like music falls,
My restless soul with peace enthralls ;
Her furtive arms about me twine,
Returning each caress of mine.
With bounding pulse and coursing vein,
How bright life looks to me again !
The earth's to me a nuptial bed,
With bluest canopy o'erhead,
Pinned up in many a rare festoon,
With jewelled star and silvery moon.

I fly my singing birds of hope
To chafe the azure turret's cope ;
Nor wait to note them change their shape
To croaking ravens fledged with crape,
Before I loose another batch
To rattle heaven's jewelled latch.
Again with ball, and top, and kite,
With hide-and-seek, and chase, and flight ;
Again the air with giddy swing
I cut as heedless bird awing ;
I vault and leap, now laughing fall,
Then score my record over all ;
Heated and flushed, with lagging pace
On hard school-bench resume my place.

Instead of sums, I fill my slate
With Maud's sweet face and curly pate ;
Heed not the teacher's call "to books,"
His "black marks," nor his darker looks.
With ready hat and restless feet,
Impatient on the doormost seat,
Await the welcome word, "Dismissed !"

To, shouting, join the boisterous rest;
Nor count the joyful minutes fly,
Till lo, the sun has fled the sky,
The birds are twittering on their perch,
And—there's another use for birch;
The weather shakes his tinkling bell,
A stern voice calls—I go—ah, well.

Again within my peaceful cot,
Where nightmare rider troopeth not,
Unconscious I await the day,
While night too fleetly glides away.
And each succeeding day that's passed
Is just a pattern of the last,
Save that, unconscious, space by space,
Some mirth falls out, care fills its place,
Some grief-clouds hover lowering o'er
Where naught but sunshine was before.
Some "growing pains" would fitful dart
Through joint and muscle, rack the heart;
Now with their restless riotings
They stretch and strain the quivering strings.

Oh, shoreward side, dear shoreward side,
See how upon the tranquil tide,
Of weary billows stole to sleep
From warfare in the maddened deep,
Within my scarred and battered boat,
In dreamy languidness I float.
The ocean's pulse-beat faintly throbs,
Its thunders sink to whispered sobs.
The billows' caps of ocean's wroth
The slanting sunlight turns to froth,
Sun-tinted with prismatic rays
That glamour all these glorious days,
And radiate the truant tides
That creep to sleep on shoreward sides.

As weary warrior sooths to rest
The maddened tumult in his breast,
With armor doffed and danger past,
Enwrapped in slumber's plaid at last,
Yet hears the din and clash of war,
In the dim distance faintly, far,
Vibrating earth with giant shocks;

His grateful pillow gently rocks.
He sees through dun-clouds far away
(As I, through ocean's distant spray),
In restless dreams that stir with morn,
Sweet, anxious face—form after form
Around his lonely pillow trips,
He feels the press of ardent lips;
He wakes to find it but a dream,
So sweet as almost real to seem.

So I upon the shoreward side,
Just pulsing on the faintest tide,
Reclining in my battered boat,
In dreamy languidness afloat,
No ripple chafing at my prow,
As when the open main I plough,
See through the soft prismatic spray,
Of maddened billows far away,
Dear loved ones from the yawning past,
Spring lithe and graceful, strong and fast;
In transient resurrection troop,
About my head and sweetly stoop,

Upon my grateful lips to press
Ambrosial-freighted tenderness.

Save that it passes hurriedly
In one bright glimpse of heaven to me,
'Tis just as real as things that bide,
This vision on the shoreward side.
Oh, world-worn weary of the strife,
Go dream in some sweet glade of life
For one brief hour, as fancy's guest,
And rock your tired soul to rest.
Oh, toiler on the angry tide,
Woo heaven on the shoreward side.
How all my pity turns to him
Whose sordid soul knows not to dream;
His heaven at length must be so new,
He cannot brook a nearer view.

Oh, shoreward side, where shadows sweep
On the smooth bosom of the deep,
From murmuring treetops overhead,
Across my undulating bed.

Oh, shoreward side, whose grateful hours
Are hallowed with the breath of flowers;
From blossoms peeping through the grass,
And mirrored on my limpid glass;
From blossoms crowning all the trees,
And waving censers on the breeze;
From clover blossoms greeting me,
As emblems of eternity;
'Mid throstle's note, the jay's wild call—
A springtide languor over all.

Oh, shoreward side, whose air is stirred
By the rich plumes of piping bird;
Oh, shoreward side by grateful glade,
With sunlight sifting through the shade,
Where, borne on every zephyring breeze,
Come angels whispering through the trees,
To melt the bonds of death and clay,
And, stooping, roll the stone away.
Oh, shoreward side, where memories group
About my couch in fancy troop,
So real, they seem to come to stay,

So frail, they fleetly pass away,
But leave their outlines on the air,
Sweet harbingers of heaven there.

Oh, shoreward side, for just a day
I'd come to dream but not to stay,
For only cowards shirk and hide
From duty on the storm-lashed tide.
For one sweet day I'd dream, and then,
Refreshed, I'd join the strife again
With those who register above
Their strokes for liberty and love,
For the broad banner of their sires,
Their God, their homes, their altar fires.



The patriarch nodding in his chair,
As he had been a half-hour there,
As gently stirred and calmly woke,
As he had drowsed, and straightway spoke.

PAUL REGNEIGH'S STORY.

“LAST night, ere we retired to rest,
I pledged the word of host to guest,
To-day, God willing, to relate
The chapter of my boy's dark fate.
The tragic tale is known to none
Save Elvandine and me alone;
And with your honor I would seal
Your lips, that you will not reveal
The sad and fateful history
Till death have claimed both her and me.”
[I promised, and have kept my bond,
Indeed for many a year beyond;
The formal letter on its face
Has blurred with long, long days of grace.
THE NARRATOR.]

“A year had passed in grief and gloom,
The chaste magnolias at the tomb
Mingled their dewy tears with ours,
Among the fragrant southern flowers
That quilted o’er the lowly bed
Wherein our sacred dust was laid.
Ural had stopped his studies, and,
With morbid mind and listless hand,
Would mope and wander all the day,
And for night’s swifter coming pray.
I urged him to resume his life
Of daily study, manly strife;
For sorrow’s lances never lose
Their keener edges while in use.

“Yielding a swift obedience, he
Resumed his duties fitfully,
Nor ever gave his studies pause
Till made a Bachelor of Laws.
And then he came to me and said,
With lips that craved and eyes that plead,
‘I cannot here take up the lines

Of duty, for around them twines
Such sweet, sad memory of the past,
I know the effort could not last.
If I would ever work again,
New scenes, new labor, and new men
Must rest my heart and goad my will,
My talents' fullest mete to fill.

“I'd speed me to the setting sun,
Where dash the silvery waves upon
The rich and shining golden sand
Of the Pacific's margin-land;
And there, amid the maddened strife,
I'd stretch the measure of my life,
Far from the scenes that hold in thrall
My heart to winding-sheet and pall;
Where tears that come will come like dew,
To freshen frame and spirit too;
For strifes where steel meets worthy steel,
Dear father, bless and bid me weal.'
I gave the boon, though hard the blow,
And smiling, blessed and bade him go.

“That night he came again and knelt :
‘Dear father, I have lately felt,’
He said, with flush on cheek and brow,
‘To crave your blessing on a vow.
At school, ah, many months ago,
I whispered pledges fond and low,
Ere yet these grief-clouds gathered o’er,
To a sweet girl, my lealty swore.
Though grief has hidden in its gloom,
Of shroud and winding-sheet and tomb,
The pleasant memories of the past,
I ought to resurrect at last
This pledge of love, of hand and heart,
That stands in heaven’s book, apart.

“‘I know not if Chalene be changed,
By silence and neglect estranged ;
Perhaps the faith, the troth, the vow,
Are given to another now.
Mayhap the love to me she plighted,
The troth by time and absence slighted,
Is dead by coldness and neglect,

That wounded pride and self-respect.
I know not if her queenly brow
Flush 'neath the orange blossoms now.
But this I know from our records,
Ne'er yet a Regneigh's lightest words,
Nor holiest pledge, but death could sever;
His covenant was good forever.

“‘Mayhap her smile can fan a blaze,
As fiercely as in yoreful days,
Love's fitful, smouldering embers sleeping,
Ere they were deluged, drowned in weeping.
Mayhap the pressure of her hand,
A thrill of love's magnetic wand,
Through every torpid sense can quake
The sweet command, “Awake! awake!”
But if the nerves refuse to thrill,
The solemn promise stands, “I will.”
If perished have the embers too,
And I still find her fond and true,
My lightest word of troth must bind me,
Still true and faithful shall she find me.’

“Next day our horses gayly trod
The sandy, shaded country road
That led to Chalene’s rural home,
And soon stood frothing on the lawn.
The boon we craved was giv’n with joy,
And we withdrew and left my boy,
With words of blessing and of pride,
His arm about his promised bride.
An even year to pass away,
Before the happy wedding day;
A year that marked new starting-place
In life’s more eager, earnest race.

“We’d said good-by, half crossed the lawn
Upon our evening journey home;
‘Ural,’ Chalene called coyly hence,
Across the painted picket-fence,
‘When I nor hoped nor dreamed this call,
I promised to attend a ball——’
‘My love and trust go hand in hand,
I’m not afraid the guards will stand

Like sentries, on the outpost sleeping,
Over my honor in your keeping,'
Ural, quick interrupting, said.
And I could see a cloud o'erspread
Her parents' faces, standing near,
As though they fain would interfere.

"As we were driving swiftly home,
A fleeting, fitful dash of gloom
Would sweep o'er Ural's sunny face,
And then was gone without a trace.
I think he felt he faced a doom
Of anguish darker than the tomb,
Which held his young life's earlier trust,
Now crumbling back to native dust.
Our parting came, and sundered now
From all my heart held dear below,
I marked each gloomy straggling day,
As, dying, it was hid away
Within the night's absorbing gloom,
Within the past's eternal tomb.

“But soon a light from darkness springs,
As week by week its tiding brings.
Now he is trudging through the rain,
Now testing a quartz-bearing vein;
Now he has struck a ledge of gold,
And now is rich in wealth untold.
Again he writes, ‘I’ve sold my claim,
My greed is sated now with gain
Exceeding all my dreams by far—
I’m pleading at the city bar.
I’ll wreath my brow with laureled fame,
And honor the old Regneigh name,
For you who’ve given it to me,
For her who still should dearer be.’

“The year sped on, the train sped back,
The headlight flashing up the track
Showed all the sparks behind it flung
In glittering, golden sands were strung.
Ah, how the death of absence flits,
Where past with future, touching, sits,
With just the dear ones wedged between—

We have no tears for what has been.
I saw the past with him was dead,
The vista all beyond, o'erhead,
In glory stretched before him thence
Its glowing, glittering opulence.
The saddened traces on his brow
Were tamed, subdued, and chastened now.

“Now trip the hearts to merry bells,
The wedding jubilate swells,
The rustics dance upon the green.
The stretch of years that lies between
My youth and now comes back to me,
And links with theirs in sympathy
My grateful, overflowing heart,
Joining my life to theirs, a part.
Again the train is steaming west,
By fond hopes freighted, fond lips blessed,
And every tap upon the bell
Seems of the wedding march a peal.
But still the sparks upon the track,
Like fiery tears, keep streaming back.

“ At first, with regularity,
His frequent letters came to me,
So full of vigor, life and hope ;
Dashed with the daring of the slope,
That tempted with its golden sand
Adventurers from every land.
The papers which he sent me, too,
Spoke of ‘The Regneigh,’ stanch and true,
Who never sought nor took a fee
From injured, guiltless poverty ;
Whose eloquence could melt and thaw
Its way to juries ; temper law
With mercy to the ignorant,
Stern justice to the learned rogue’s cant.

“ Life flowed amain, I was content,
My days in peaceful ways were spent ;
My horses, dogs, my pipe and books,
The babbling of familiar brooks,
That talked to me of sweet lang syne,
When dearer feet kept step with mine.
I knew his spirit could not chafe,

His busy life would keep him safe;
I saw through eyes fast growing dim
My earthly hopes all wrapped in him,
And thought that my declining life,
E'en though bereft of child and wife,
Could pass, with longings satisfied,
In day-dreams on the shoreward side.

"Soon Ural's letters grew less clear,
And ere the lapsing of the year
Long gaps would intervene between,
And then he'd write me he had been
Prospecting on the mountain trail,
Or shooting eagles, bears or quail,
Or founding banks, or selling stocks,
Or conquering quartz from sullen rocks;
Or seeking nuggets in ravines,
Along the beds of mountain streams;
Or gazing at great waterfalls,
Adown their smooth-worn rocky walls;
Or that he'd in the forest roam—
But never that he was at home.

"At length there dawned a lucid spell,
I thought all things again were well,
That duty's call at last had won.
He wrote me that he had a son,
And craved my blessing and my name,
To consecrate with him to fame.
I gave it, with a prayer for him;
For on my soul there fell a dim,
Impending shadow of some stroke
'Twould blast him, as Jove's bolt the oak.
Again his regular letters came,
Again he trod the paths of fame
With the confiding, easy tread
Of one by subtile genius led.

"His grandest efforts now were made,
As though some haunting sprite were laid
With every triumph of his mind;
With every new success that twined .
Fresh twigs upon his laureled brow,
'Mongst the bright leaves that wreath it now.
Alas! vain trust, the slow weeks passed

Again, each voiceless as the last.
And when faint hope was almost lost,
He wrote me from some northern coast,
Where water in July congeals,
That he was hunting there for seals;
Next, that his knowledge he'd perfect
In Manitoba's dialect.

“Again, when many months had flown,
He wrote he was once more at home.
But meanwhile, in a letter's place,
A manuscript all blurred on face,
And interlined, and written o'er
Some lines effaced he'd wrote before,
With here and there a trace of tears,
Filled my fond heart with boding fears.
I knew he'd sent it by mistake
For one he'd meant the mails to take;
I knew that he was wont to while
Long hours with the Muses' smile.
But sad the smile there was in this,
I have it with me, here it is:

URAL'S MONODY.

“‘Did you hear the weird-like clanging
Of the jangling midnight bell?
Did you know its lazy summons
Hastened many on to hell?
I was heark’ning to its pealing,
I was list’ning to it stealing,
With a half-unwakeful feeling,
On my half-unconscious ears;
When another bell came ringing,
Pulled by hasty hand and flinging
Echoes riotous and clinging
O’er my sleepful, musing fears.
As I started up in terror,
In the dim, uncertain light,
And unlocked the door that screened me
From the wanderers of the night,
I beheld a man before me
With the face-marks of the grave.
His lips were dumb,

His pulses numb,
His eyes blazed like the light
Of torches shed
O'er corpses' head
In weird sepulchral rite.
Only did those eyes implore me
To the manuscript he gave,
And before I knew him mortal,
Or from other kingdom's portal,
There was nothing with me, save
The manuscript:

“‘I am weary, wildly weary,
And the world keeps on its round,
And it says of me, “He’s gifted,
But he’s drifting out and down.”
If it only knew the causes,
Could it say and think it true,
As it often does, to help me,
“There is hope for such as you?”
If it knew that I were breathing,

Just because my race of old
Were cast with thews of iron
In a centenary mould;
That for months I'm only trying,
Hoping, praying to be dying,
But I can't howe'er I try;
That the form the world calls living
Is but anguish to me giving,
While I vainly seek to die;
Would it still be rashly saying,
Would it, could it dare be praying,
For a world-sick soul a-straying,
For the help of such as I?
Ah, how oft have I been saying
Unto mortals I've been straying
From the paths they call divine:
"Let us heap our troubles heavenward,
In a mighty funeral pyre,
Based on earth with cloud-capped summit—
Let us dance around the fire
Till the gorgeous blaze consume them,
Smoke-wreathed, ashened griefs—entomb them,

Yours and mine.”
But they were dwelling in them,
Like a tortoise in his shell,
In their sins and loved them well;
And they fondly lingered there,
And they would not crawl without them,
And they had no use for prayer,
And they scoffed the thoughts of hell.
Then shall I tread bravely onward?
Ah, if you who libel “brave”
But knew the lonely paths I take
To hide an obscure grave,
Lest the heated forceps, nipping,
At my tortured heart thews griping,
At my world-worn, weary beat,
Held there by hand
Of traitorous friend,
With patient, hellish art,
Should force me into groaning,
And the world should mock my moaning;
Ah, you’d lose the zest of living,
And you’d know what says “forgiving”

Is a hyperbolic lie,
Forged to meet the pangs of dying
To a conscience ever crying
With a weird and wailing cry.

“‘Are there others, so I ask me,
In my more than mortal pain,
Who are braver far than I am
In this rushing, home-bound train?
Are there others bravely stooping,
Globuled anguish-tears to hide,
As we speed along the journey
On this compulsory ride?
Are they hiding Spartan foxes,
With their vital-gnawing fangs,
And bravely smiling, so that we
May never reck their pangs?
Why don't they hold a hand out
To a haggard face like mine,
That's cringed so many months before
A ruined household shrine?

“‘Do they think the germs of manhood,
Overgrown with weeds of shame,
Cannot spring up and thrive again,
And blossom forth to fame?
Are they selfish in their crying?
Do they reck the fates are lying,
And their griefs will soon pass by?
That for years of anguish riven
Will a recompense be given
On this cloudful side of heaven?
So in vain have lingered I.’

* * * * *

“I was seated at my table,
I had turned the gaslight on,
I had read the tear-stained papers
Slowly over, one by one,
When the thought came rushing o’er me,
Whither went the weary feet?
He may even now be lying,
Gasping, agonizing, dying,
In the cold, deserted street,
While my room is bright and warm.

Scarcely muffled from the storm,
Snow and sleet that whirled along
'Round the gables and the gate-tops,
I was hastening along,
Finishing my hurried dressing,
And the path my feet were pressing,
Scarce a furlong yet ahead,
To the sullen river led:
When I heard the sound of voices
And the tramp of heavy feet,
And I paused, to wait their coming,
In a shadow of the street.

“For something seemed to tell me
That my search was ended there,
That the writer of the manuscript
Was past the reach of prayer.
As they bore the burden by me
I could see the ghastly eyes,
Still unclosed and glaring upward
To the sympathizing skies.
But they told me at the inquest

When they searched him for a clue
They only found these words, inscribed
In ink of bloody hue:
'Know ye guilty ones who've wronged me,
That for other sakes than thine,
I have drowned the secret with me,
I have died without a sign.'

"My heart no more suspense would stand;
Before the nightfall I had planned
A journey to his western home,
To lighten or confirm my gloom.
Chalene's aged father came to me
And volunteered his company.
He said, with scarce-repressing tear,
That three brief letters in the year
Were all that from Chalene had come
To cheer their lonely, anxious home.,
Next morning when the train steamed out,
With many a snort, and scream, and shout,
It bore two old sad-hearted men,
Its greatest speed too slow for them.

Through wood and prairie-land we sped,
And every eve when sunlight shed
Its slanting rays, then sank to sleep,
Upon the bosom of the deep ;
While dragging tired far behind,
Our lazy creeping shades reclined ;
We knew, in our impatient haste,
Five hundred mile-posts had been passed.

“The shivering mile-stones shrank away
As, nearing sunset day by day,
We passed the Rockies’ lofty copes,
And sped adown their western slopes,
Until we’d belted all the States
And panted through the golden gates ;
Nor tempted here the gorgeous street
Swift echoes from our restless feet.
Adown the valley lulled to sleep
By hush-a-bys from ocean’s deep—
Which the fond lips of every crest
That kissed the beach and sank to rest,
And wiped their eyes upon the strand

With longing looks to far inland,
Breathed out upon the languid breeze,
That whispered back from all the trees—
Adown this sea-washed vale we sped,
With longings for the far ahead.

“Towards the Orient, rising high,
Like barbed spears that pierce the sky,
The Coast Range mountains graceful bend
In their unswerving polar trend,
While eastward yet, steep after steep,
The mighty Sierras stand to keep,
Like faithful sentries night and day,
Ward over all the vaults where lay
The wealth of Nature's alchemies
Bequeathed by dying centuries.
So high they stand, the alpenglow
Kisses stern Shasta's serried brow
Long after birds on level plain
Have folded wings for sleep again.
At length a curving of our train
Shows us a village of the plain,

That, praying at the mountain's foot,
Had lingered there till it took root;
And wafted incense from its flues
To deities in gorgeous hues
That dwelt in high ærial towers,
Among the giddy rocks and bowers.

“Thence, mounted on swift cayuse steed,
With guide to serve us at our need,
We journeyed forth by early day,
And through the foot-hills took our way,
Along a sinuous mountain trail
That now at some rude chasm would quail,
Then 'round a crag would winding creep
Whilst breasting still the mountain steep.
The squirrel held his feasts near by,
The saucy magpie lingered nigh,
The picket guards, where clamorous jay
Stood sentry all the livelong day,
Fell screaming back within the shade
Of oak and pine for ambuscade;

While gay-winged bird of tuneful throat
Trilled many a score that heaven wrote,
Or mocked us from the tall madrone,
Or chattered from some towering cone,
While peeped there many a tufted head
From sheltering leaf of deeper red,
The scarlet foliage of the blush
That crowns the manzanita bush.
That night we camped beneath the trees,
Tucked in by heaven's canopies,
Pierced by the crags in myriad seams
Through which celestial glory streams;
Through which fond airy guardians flit,
And 'round our pillows watching sit.
But ere the next day's sun had sped
From zenith towards his ocean bed,
Our mountain guide, with level hand,
Points toward a stretch of table-land;
And when anon we veered around
The base of a steep wooded mound,
A broad-based castle met the eye—
We knew our journey's end was nigh.

The house stood back among the trees,
Its silver gilded cornices
Reflecting back the setting sun,
While agile shadows slyly run
Hence to their substance leaf or branch,
Stirred by the breezes from the ranche.
Our bronchos ambled to the gate
In dust clouds dense as clouds of fate.
Chalene stood open-armed, and ere
We'd touched the ground a joyful tear,
A sunny smile, a swift embrace
Welcomed our coming. In her face
Lurked more the maiden, wary, coy,
Than the serener mother's joy.

"No trace of sorrow, blasted hope,
Nor blighted life in its fair scope;
No marks of the neglected wife,
Of midnight tears, of daily strife,
With lot her will could not control,
No longings of an unfilled soul.
She seemed as happy, void of care,

As fresh, and innocent, and fair,
As light of spirit and as free
From care's and grief's corroderly,
As on the night, two years ago,
She made responses soft and low,
That bound her to my son for life
In the sweet shackles of a wife.

"She led us, romping like a child,
In very raptures almost wild—
Deferring questions, in her eye,
To hostly hospitality—
Into the wide and stately dome
Her very presence christened 'home.'
Then sped with agile feet away,
Humming a homely nursery lay.
Anon we heard her tripping down,
Her voice mixed with a sweeter one
That spoke the unwritten idiom—
Of childhood's universal tongue;
No babel ever could confuse it,
Nor lapse of the dark ages lose it.

“With a demure, mock courtesy
She introduced Sir Paul to me,
And lightly tripping on before,
She led us to her own boudoir:
A miracle of blended light,
And breezy shade, and trapping bright;
Of relics culled along the coast,
From mountain tops where they’d been lost
Since Noah’s bark rode on the flood;
From deep ravine in distant wood,
Dark caverns in the earth profound,
Were in profusion strewn around;
While easel, picture, statue, book
Seemed to grow out of every nook.

“In sooth, she filled her station well,
And when, at length, she came to tell
How Ural was abroad again,
Among wild scenes and wilder men,
Up in the diggings where he sought
For treasure that he needed not,
I wondered how a man could roam

Abroad from wife, and child, and home;
That home a very Paradise,
Which such a seeming angel tries
To fill so full of love and joy;
I pitied my erratic boy,
Yet blamed him, while I pitied, more
Than ever I had done before.

“While yet we spake a cloud was blown
Athwart the horizon, low down
Among the shades of lapsing day,
A half a league or so away.
It was a dust cloud rising o’er
The path we’d trodden just before;
It seemed to fly, as though the wind
Were high, and mad, and full behind.
Chalene beheld, in her calm way,
Said ‘Ural is en route to-day;
A vicious, fiery steed he strides,
And always like the whirlwind rides;
Up hill, or down, or on the plain,
He never slackens bit nor rein.’

“A minute more, and through the dust,
Speeding like messengers in trust
Of pardon in their fateful hands,
To some doomed wretch who trembling stands
Beneath the beam and dangling noose,
Just faltering forth his last adieus;
A moment more, and flecked with foam
And dust, both horse and riders come.
Dismounting neither slow nor fast,
Not half in keeping with the haste
They'd shown in that fierce, headlong ride,
They entered calmly, side by side,
Along the flower-margined aisle,
Snipping the floral buds the while.

“'Neath Ural's sombrero his face
Shone proud and haughty; the old grace
Was in his strong and springy tread,
His auburn locks curled 'round his head.
But oh, within his eyes there shone
The look of flames gone out upon
Some fallen altar, while the coals,

As in perdition's night lost souls,
Glow red and angry through the gloom
Of night, o'er which, when day shall come,
'Twill pale them into embers gray,
And strew them ruthless by the way,
To die and blacken in the sun,
While wrinkled years their courses run.

“His guest paced with him stride for stride,
As he had kept on that wild ride;
A comely man, with shoulders squared,
And form erect and head upreared,
One arm within a scarf was slung,
And uselessly beside him hung.
Ere scarce I'd time to notice this,
Chalene met Ural with a kiss;
He introduced his friend, and then
Paced slowly toward the house again.
When they had bathed and changed their dress,
I heard her urge, with kind caress,
Ural to come to her boudoir,
For some surprise she had in store.

“He came with the old listless mien,
Half-tired, half-bated, half-serene,
But never in my life’s wide range
Have I beheld such instant change,
Such happiness as spread all o’er
His face, as through the open door
He saw me stand expectant there.
‘I thank thee, Lord,’ he said, in prayer,
Then folded me in strong embrace,
And pressed his lips to brow and face.
The baleful look fled from his eyes
With the first rapture of surprise;
The settled gloom fused from his brow
As April sun melts April snow.

“The veil of years was lifted now
From lip and cheek, and eye and brow;
Just as the landscape, when ’tis pressed
By settling cloud upon its crest,
Sleeps dark and gloomy till the sun
Flings off the clouds and smiles upon
Each little nook and knoll uneven,

And floods them with the light of heaven.
Then with the air of genial host :
'I welcome you, sir, to the coast
Of flowers, of gold, and stalwart men,'
He said to Chalene's sire, and then
Asked how we'd ever come to roam
So far off from our sunrise home.

"Cheerily bidding us to come
Below into the supper-room,
He introduced us to his friend,
While offering his aid to lend
To ease the bandage on his wrist,
Which by a dozen splints was pressed,
Explaining thus: 'A few days since
He met this wound in my defence.'
'A trifle,' laughing, says the friend,
'A seal of amity—'twill mend.'
Meanwhile, Chalene stood useful round,
Brought lint and ewer, dressed the wound
With all the soft dexterity
Inspired by woman's sympathy.

“That night, when once we were alone,—
We spent the night in Ural’s room,—
I strove to dissipate the spell
That seemed to hold him in its thrall;
To bind him with some baleful lune,
As writhing serpents, Laocoon;
That warped his nature and his face
Till better self scarce showed a trace.
It pained him, in his love for me,
My vain solicitude to see,
And when he could no longer stand
The picture my fond hopes had planned,
He sighed and said, ‘I may not tell
How in a “Roofless” house I dwell.’

“Next morning when the risen sun
Over the mountain top peeped down,
I looked into its shining face
To see if I could find a trace
Of messages some friend had sent
From the far distant Orient.
Whatever messages there were,

I could not read if written there.
It seemed to blink at me and say
'I missed you on my outward way.
But, bless you, I go everywhere,
I'd find you flying in the air;
No matter though it's noon at home,
They can't have morn here till I come.'

"Our prayers said and breakfast o'er,
We mounted our mustangs once more,
And sallied forth in leisure mien
To view the woodland, glade, ravine.
Ural's young friend remained at home
To ease his wound, for it had come
To fever by the headlong ride
He'd taken down the mountain side
The day before, and he was fain
To rest and soothe the torturing pain.
We ambled on through flowery green,
On mountain's slope, in wild ravine,
And gazed on many a granite wall
Down which the noisy cascades fall.

“Our saddles seemed a resting-place,
So easy was the mustang’s pace.
At length, far up into the glen,
We struck a ranche of busy men.
A store was there, a small hotel,
A bank, post-office, and—well
A little mining village, where
The men knew every art but prayer.
We had our dinner, chat, and smoke,
And once again to saddle took.
We journeyed back another way;
Our route through wildest scenery lay,
And when within a mile of home
We left our steeds to go alone.

“We took our way, afoot, between
The bushy walls of a ravine.
Anon one craggy side seemed smote
By Titan hand, its rocks uproot,
And its foundations levelled low
To form a basin for the flow
Of hidden springs that rise and make

The waters of a glacier lake.
'Twas scarce a fathom deep, or more,
And not ten rods from shore to shore.
Its farther bank was steep and bold;
White sandstone, mixed with sands of gold
And glittering mica, threw a deep,
Soft light upon the waters' sweep.

"The fringe above of trees and grass
Made the calm lake a looking-glass;
The very birds that flew amain
Were mirrored on its face again;
And not a leaf moved in the trees,
Stirred by the lazy, evening breeze
From its umbrageous resting-place,
But quivered on the waters' face,
And seemed, in a fantastic set,
To waltz, and whirl, and pirouette,
Advance, retreat, and courtesy,
And bow, and smirk, and dance to me,
Till my dazed senses hardly knew
Which was the false and which the true.

“There was a space, a rod or more,
Between the hither bank and shore,
Formed by the arching of the rocks
Above our heads, which all the shocks
Of time and elemental strife,
In semi-tropic regions rife,
In all the centuries agone
Had never scored a wrinkle on.
Over our heads an arbor grew;
The giant trees their shadows threw,
In all their primal strength and grace,
Upon the mirroring waters’ face;
A wire fence upon the edge
Was stretched to screen the dangerous ledge.

“Within this leafy, cool retreat
There was a rustic arbor seat;
Two forms strolled up upon the grass,
Two figures fell upon our glass;
I needed not to look again—
They were Chalene and Ural’s friend.
They stood with manner more than kind,

Her arm about his waist entwined ;
She drew him coyly to the seat,
And knelt down archly by his feet.
She tenderly caressed his wound,
And then her arm stole up around
His neck. At first his soul repents,
His manhood half resists, consents.

“ Her suppliant form he half caressed,
Her proffered lips to his were pressed ;
Her father leaned against a rock,
As though prostrated by the shock ;
Great beads of perspiration broke
Upon his face ; he hoarsely spoke :
‘ What is this horrid thing I see ?
Can it be real—oh, where are we ?’
With even voice Ural replies,
A transient murder in his eyes :
‘ That is a mirage, sir, from—well
The border-land outlying hell ;
With scarce a finger’s length, I ween,
The path and precipice between.

“‘The flash of everlasting fires,
Where spirit dies but not expires,
Reflecting on the densy glooms
Of the dim margined stretch of tombs,
Holds out yon faithful picture there
Upon our rarer, lighter air.
To find perdition’s darkest shades
You need not go to storied Hades;
’Tis only but a rod or so ;
I’ve been there and I ought to know.
If hell comes up to torment man
In the wise Ruler’s hidden plan,
’Tis not in earthquake, plague, or storm,
But in degraded woman’s form.’

“Then facing toward me, he said,
While all my heart in pity bled :
‘You know how many hours have passed
Since my shame-freighted lips confessed,
As by your faithful side I knelt,
That in a “Roofless” house I dwelt.
The iron in my soul I wore,

And never thought to tell you more;
But now God's wisdom deems it best
That Satan should reveal the rest.
You see what has been torturing me
In all its hell-born infamy,
And yet I dared not tell the shame
I'd brought upon the Regneigh name.'

"His hand lay quiet on the seat,
I clasped it, the machine-like beat
Of pulse was hastened not a stroke;
The smile in cynic beauty broke
About his mouth, and grimly played
At hide-and-seek within the shade
Of dimples mined in either cheek,
And ere my palsied lips could speak,
His voice strode on as firm and even
As planets roll in orbs of heaven—
Without a tremor or a jolt.
But in his eye there flashed a bolt,
As storm-cloud shows ere yet it take
Its way to earth through trees that quake.

URAL'S STORY.

“‘This once—then silence evermore—
I’ll speak of what has gone before.
I’ll sweep the shadows that have lain
So many months ’twixt us amain;
Parted our wonted fellowship,
That flowed from eye, and heart, and lip.
I know you still will take my hand,
Despite the shame-spot of the damned
That burns, and eats, and cankers there,
And mocks the healing balm of prayer;
That burns, and eats, and cankers on,
That only death’s chill flood can drown;
And even then ’twill leave its trace
Upon my ashes in their vase.

“‘You know, now, why I never meet
The hands of man in friendly greet;
Lest this infernal leprous shame
Might ’noculate some honest palm.

I feel,' he said, with downcast eyes,
'You know my heart, and won't despise
Your son for misdeed not his own,
Which all his anguish can't atone;
Which naught on earth, above, beneath
Can cancel, but the hand of death.'
For answer, I but closer pressed
The cherished hand upon my breast,
Our pulses thrilling fast beneath,
In sweet unison, 'Yours till death.'

"Again in even voice he said,
A voice in which e'en hope was dead:
'Not many months had passed away
Before I knew what common clay
My idol was, and that she wore
Beneath her sweet exterior
A heart as cold as northern ice.
I thought her not a child of vice,
But only heartless, dead and cold—
A young form casing vitals old;
A form of rare and peerless merit,

Hiding some hideous long-lost spirit.
I could not love her, but there plead
A yearning for affection, dead.

“‘The heart will plead for memories gone,
And cheat e’en reason from her throne.
I ne’er so briefly let her see
I’d read her soul’s deep treachery,
But threw myself with nervous life
Into the world’s most maddening strife.
Strive as I may, go where I will,
My house is “Roofless,” “Roofless,” still.
I shunned the haunts of busy men
For Nature’s solitude, and then
I felt my shame was known to all;
My shadow on the gulch’s wall
Would, loathing, shrink away from me,
And dance in wild, weird mockery.

“‘And when, at length, I’d wander home,—
’Twere mockery such a loathsome tomb
To call by such a sacred name,—

I'd move her thence, to hide my shame,
Unto some other town, but still
The haunting demon came at will.
Rumor, which reaches him the last
Who's most at stake, fell thick and fast,
While now and then, amid the hush,
Some act which ought to bring a blush
To veriest wanton reached my ear ;
But she, with ready lips, would swear
It was all false, and she was true
As angel in its fields of blue.

“‘I had no proof that she was base,
I sought no test of my disgrace ;
And when she told me, low and shy,
She'd be a mother by and by,
I prayed, and hoped, and fondly thought,
Whatever guile her life had wrought,
She'd hold her unborn infant's name
Free from the stain of lust and shame.
Again I crushed my withered pride,
Again I sought the maddened tide

Of stock exchange, and court, and bar;
Again my fame spread near and far.
Fortune, that frowned on needy men,
Heaped my unneeding lap with gain.

“‘I bought this wide domain of land,
Away from all temptations, and
Yon regal palace for her reared,
My regal income with her shared.
I lavished wealth on works of art,
Thinking, forsooth, to fill her heart
With better purpose, nobler aim,
And choke out every weed of shame.
And when she laid upon my arms
Her boy, in all his guileless charms,
I thought, with many a fervent prayer,
I surely saw salvation there.
I claimed not for me happiness,
For that was dead, but only peace.

“‘Alas! the man who ties his soul
To such an one had better roll,

Deserted, on the ocean's foam,
Outcast from ship, from friend, and home;
Had better on the billows stand,
A hundred miles from boat or land,
With but a plank between his feet
And the mad ocean's pulse and beat;
Had better drink the maddening tide
That lashes him on every side,
Than hope to quench his thirsty soul;
The yearnings of his heart console,
For merely human sympathy,
From such a soulless thing as she.'

"Her father, who by turns had flushed and paled,
Now faltering said, his eyes before him quailed:
'You will not murder her for this foul wrong.
Spare her till morn, and I will take her home,
And she shall never cross your path in life,
Nor ever claim the dower of a wife.'
'I would not kill a snake,' Ural replies,
'A slimy, crawling thing with baleful eyes;

I would not stain my hands for one who fell
So deep into the darksome pits of hell
Before her vows a six-month had been given
In sacred rite, in sight of man and heaven.
Fear not. I would not dignify her shame,
Nor call forth scorn upon her infant's name,
For such a loathsome, such a soulless thing,
Whose lewdness fits her like her wedding-ring.

“‘But there are deeper stabs to bear, and, oh!
This last is the unkindest, hardest blow;
I loved my friend more than I loved my life.
Together we have hewn through many a strife,
We’ve feasted, famished, and together slept,
Rejoiced together, and together wept.
Together in the bowels of earth we’ve mined,
Mingled in scenes of city life refined;
Not one moon since he fell with shattered arm
He’d raised to shield my periled head from harm.
But yesterday, within a deep ravine,
A deadly rifle glistened in the sheen

Of vagrant sunshine sifted through the trees
By fitful flutterings of the sullen breeze.

“‘I saw the gleaming of the fateful bore,
And had but time to throw myself before
Him, when the well-aimed leaden ball
Crashed through the unresisting, leafy wall.
I fell unhurt into the near-by brook—
The ball was buried in my mother’s book.
I ought not to have left him home to-day,
Within the siren’s and temptation’s way;
Mine was the fault and mine must be the loss,
For never more our mutual paths may cross.
But vengeance on him! ’twere a covin’s brag
To patch one’s honor with such flimsy rag.

“‘A man would pay too dear with life
For wantoning with such a wife;
For plucking such a wilted flower,
The toy of every lecherous boor.
I’d better be a buccaneer,
And hang out lights for ships to steer

Their way upon some treacherous coast,
And dash to pieces and be lost,
Than label with an honored name
A wanton who, with lips of shame,
Shall tempt men on their passions' swell
Adown the headlong paths to hell;
Rob them of honor, peace, and fame,
And leave them murrained with her shame.

“‘Let him go hence, I owe him nought—
I’ve paid the debt his peril bought.
I’ll bury him in the deep tomb
That fiend with hellish craft has hewn,
For friends, hope, honor; all but you
Are hid in its chill gloom from view.’”



“By this time we were walking home,
For night the landscape crept upon.
With swifter step I forged ahead,
Along the path that homeward led,

Conning, as I pursued my way,
What means I'd use, what words I'd say
To the false friend, whose honor lost,
Forfeits him shelter, friendship, host.

" I found him ; told him there await
His steed and trappings at the gate ;
Bade him to make what haste he could,
For Ural came beyond the wood.
Too noble to deny his crime,
Too proud to ask extended time,
Upon his waiting steed he vaults ;
'My curses on the siren, false,
Who in a soft, unguarded hour
Threw over me her witching power,'
He muttered as his restive steed
Sprang from the spur with frenzied speed.

"No word was said to false Chalene,
She met us in her sweetest mien.
She played, and sang, and tossed her boy,
And seemed a very thing of joy,

That bubbled up and effervesced
From purest springs within her breast.
Her sweet voice echoed through the halls,
Refracted back by smooth-toned walls.
She rallied us on being dull,
She said our brains with sights were full
Of mountain, cascade, glen, ravine;
She little knew what we had seen
Reflected from the tell-tale lake.
At length her aged father spake:

“‘Chalene,’ he said, ‘grant me an hour
Alone with you in your boudoir.’
‘With pleasure,’ said the smiling girl,
And waltzed ahead with graceful whirl,
Tossing her boy in steady arms,
Displaying all her cheerful charms.
Ural and I then sought his room—
It stifled like a musty tomb.
But scarcely had we gained a chair,
And settled down in silence there,
Before Chalene, with flooding tears,

Comes clinging to his knees, and swears
We were all wrong, 'twas some deceit,
She had not been to 'The Retreat.'

"She had not seen the stranger since
We left that morn; she knew not whence
He'd gone, nor even why he went;
She only knew her day was spent
In household cares; nor light, nor brief,
And then welled up in storms of grief:
'I married you for good or ill,'
She sobbed to Ural, 'and until
Death do us part I'll never go
From your dear side in weal or woe.
I have no hope, no thought but you,
As gospel promises, I'm true;
Your wife for life and death I'll be,
In time and in eternity.'

"Such bold, unblushing perfidy
Made me forget my chivalry;
I rose and cursed her till my lips

Seemed withered to their frothing tips.
Then, like a reptile penned, she turned,
And her unguarded fury burned.
Her cheek could glow, her bosom swell,
Her eyes gleam with the fires of hell:
‘’Twas yonder fool who wrecked my life,
He knows not how to keep a wife.
Oh, Ural! if you’d only think
How oft you left my side to drink;
How your long absence, many a day,
Left me to fears and tears a prey.’

“‘But, dearest, I’ll forgive your sin.’
She sweetly said, ‘and you can win
My whole heart back to you again
From all the host of rival men.
I’m only waiting to condone
Your erring life, my darling one.
I’ll humbly ask the Lord to meet,
Strengthen, and guide your wayward feet;
To bring you safely back to me,
From your old erring ways set free.

God knows how innocent I am,
And you——' With eyes of living flame
Ural sprang up. Before his glance
She turned her hardened face askance :

“‘The light from yonder farthest star,
Though trailing slow as water rolls,
Could reach the earth, oh, sooner far,
Than we could join our severed souls.

“‘Such hells of torturing memories flood
Between the perjured and the true,
You could not reach me if you would,
And I will never come to you.

“‘Go hence, or stay, it matters not,
For time, nor space, nor prayer can bring
Love back to her who has forgot,
Who's made her vows a wanton thing.

“‘I have no pity, find no fault,
I feel no pangs of jealousy ;

•

My heart's to you a carnal vault,
Where Time's tread echoes vacancy.

“I have no curses for your crime,
No blessings from my lips shall fall;
I have no prayer, nor chant, nor chime
For your dead memory in its pall.

“This once, forbear that wanton's song,
Let chivalry find you this excuse:
Chalene, you could not do a wrong—
You have no soul to save or lose.’

“Stung by indifference into wrath,
She threw herself across his path,
Where he was striding up the floor,
And like a tortured fury swore.
Her long hair straggled from its comb,
Her lips were flecked with angry foam,
Her speech was labored, hoarse, and thick,
Her breath, in spasms, loud and quick.

“‘You are the picture of a man,
A variegated, rattling toy,
To leave your wife a full month’s span.
Neglect your own bright, darling boy.

“‘To let your dotard father, there,
Heap curses on your pure wife’s head.’
‘Pause!’ Ural cries. ‘Chalene, forbear!’
Then turning to her father said:

“‘Mayhap you’d better bear away
This she-wolf to her native heath;
Lest, haply tempted, I might pray,
And heaven grant the boon—her death.

“‘Such crimes as her’s stop not with life,
But on the tide of ages roll;
The seed of a dishonored wife
Is death to many an unborn soul.

“‘Chalene, go hence, and may you live,
Till even you would wish to die,

Some horrid death, so it would give
Surcease to torturing memory.

“Till not a vestige nor a trace
Remains to tell what once had been
The cursed beauty of your face,
By which you’ve lured to lust and sin.

“Till every muscle, nerve shall prance
(Fell demons that will not be laid),
To measures of St. Vitus’s dance,
In hideous, mocking masquerade.

“And may your carnal passion-fires,
Though burned to embers long ago,
Still, fanned by your diseased desires,
In all their hellish rage burn on.

“And when the flesh dries on its bone,
And every drop of blood be dried,
Still may the raging flames burn on,
And lust be still unsatisfied.’

"A statue of impenitence,
She stood within the full moon's light;
Her father bore her, screaming, thence—
I've never seen her since that night.

"I went to bed, but not to sleep,
My soul in agony would weep.
The saddest sight the sun looks on
Is that of family altar, torn
From its deep moorings, shattered, while
The household gods, in many a pile,
Lie soiled, and stripped, and broken 'round,
Disfigured, on the careless ground.
I know not the unbounded scope
Of mercy's plan, atonement's hope;
Yet what could wanton mother be,
But lewd fiend, in eternity?

"A broken limb may be reset,
Flesh-wounds will heal, and bones reknit;
Fever be banished from the veins,
Reason, o'erturned, resume her reins;

But there's no styptic for the heart.
Oh, far beyond the healing art
Of man is that creative power
That, broken in a luckless hour,
Can mould new hope, and faith, and trust
From their betrayed and lifeless dust.

"Oh, heedless woman, wanton bride,
'Tis not the husband by your side,
Whose faith, and trust, and hope you hold;
But, holier far, 'tis yours to mould
The weal, the woe, the destiny,
To the remotest century,
Of many a thousand yet unborn
You'll meet on resurrection morn,
To bless or madly curse your name,
As you have lived in faith or shame.

"Next morning, ere the break of day,
We'd ridden many a mile away;
The title-deed of house and land,
Signed, sealed, and witnessed by my hand,

Transferred to child and faithless bride,
Ural had left, lain side by side,
With letters to her father, there,
Making him guardian to the heir.
Not one conditioned prayer or word;
He left her free as mateless bird.
To go or stay, to sell or rent—
She needed not to ask consent.
By night his mining stocks were sold,
And we were speeding through the wold,
The tunnel, hill-side, level plain,
Toward Orient and home again.

“The train left fiery tears behind,
But glowed like blood before; the wind
Swept all the sparks and cinders back;
The headlight, flaming on the track,
Showed a long stretch of milestones there;
As monuments reared by despair,
They seemed to shiver in the blast
As we flew rapid, reckless past;
And ere the last was fairly gone,

The next would come, impulsive, on.
Ah, thus, I cried, the tombs are met,
Of faith, and hope, and trust; and yet
We scarce have time to heave a sigh
For one ere, rushing headlong by,
We meet the next—in endless train
They glisten, shiver, sink again.

“We reached Atlantic’s busy shore,
And the next outward steamer bore,
Her stanch-ribbed, even decks upon,
An old man and an older one.
Oh, old is he whose heart has been
Stripped of its flowers and summer green;
The soil so blighted, cursed and bare,
No thing of life can flourish there.

“Through England, Ireland, Scotland, Wales;
Through gorgeous Italy, where pales
The peerless sun before the eyes
Of beauteous maids who greet its rise;
We climbed the mighty Alps, whose heads

Reach up among the azure beds
Of dreaming angels, wrapped in robes
Of gauzy clouds, and rocked by globes,
In swaying, soothing undulation,
Young as to-day, old as creation ;
Explored the Ganges and the Nile,
His restless feet were never still ;
Upon the Mount of Olives stood,
Where, ages since, His precious blood
Our Saviour shed for weary souls.
Oh, down the tide of time there rolls,
On every swelling billow's crest,
The sanguinary flood, the blest,
Free healing balm : we've but to lave
Our sinking souls, and they are safe.

"Throughout the Holy City's streets,
Where now the thousand minarets
Call Moslem Turk to impious prayer,
We trod, but found no solace there
For broken heart and trust betrayed—
No spell the haunting memories laid.

In every country, every clime,
Lands wrinkled, seamed, and scarred by time;
O'er rocks worn smooth by centuries' tread,
O'er mountains reared on nations' dead;
On seas the fretting prow of boat
Had chafed so little that we float
And scarcely stir them as we pass,
Their waters numb as seas of glass.
But all in vain, no solace eased,
We found no balm for mind diseased.

“At length one summer day we hove
Our anchor in the glorious cove
Of grand old Cork; about the bay
And city lingered many a day.
One eve, when I was lying down
From sheer fatigue, he went alone
On a long ramble up the coast,
And stayed so late I feared him lost.
Returning in the twilight gray,
With lighter heart, more cheerful way
Than I for months had seen him wear—

I was rejoiced; for it was clear
A light across his soul had broke.
I asked him why, and thus he spoke:

“‘Musing, I strayed through the grateful shade
Of towering cliffs by the waters’ side
When the tide was out.
With a murmured rush and a whispered “hush,”
As groom woos willing bride,
The sly caressing tide
Kissed the smooth, shining pebbles about.

“‘Backward I turned, the waves unurned
Sprinkled and swept the sanded floor,
For the tide was in.
Higher and higher they climb and aspire,
Up on the granite walled shore
They break with muffled roar,
And recede into caverns again.

“‘On a mantling rock, above the shock,
I stand amid symphony mournfully sweet,

And strive to audit the words
To the music of spheres as it breaks on my ears,
Played from ocean's prone sheet,
Spread out at my feet,
By spirit-hands at the chords.

“Timid and slow, a minute ago,
Came a little girl's pattering feet,
And she locked her wee fingers in mine:
“’Tis the pulse of God beneath the flood
Makes its bosom so beat,
Its waves rise and retreat,
And the songs are the dirges of Time.

“For hark to Him say: “Take the wings of the day
To the uttermost parts of the earth,
Or descend to the depths of hell.
To the deeps of the sea in hiding flee,
To the arid desert's dearth;
To the caves of echo's birth—
You'll find me there as well.”

“‘Can nothing quell the wild waves’ swell,
And woo that wail astill?’
I asked as we homeward trod.
“Once,” she said, “to a hand outspread,
And a sweet-voiced ‘Peace, be still,’
Waves slept at His will;
But the voice was the voice of God.”’

“Ah, wisdom, I cried, is hidden from men,
And revealed unto babes in their innocent ken;
Theirs is the hand, the voice, the way,
To call back impetuous feet astray;
To beckon us forth from the gloomy cell,
We’ve builded with morbid skill and well,
In our own dark souls, made darker still,
Immured by the walls of a sullen will.
My son, I said, I’m glad you’ve found
A ray of light, and heard the sound
Of duty’s call unto life again,
To your place in the world of striving men;
To your place, oh, far more precious, even,
By your mother’s side, in your Father’s heaven.

“‘I’ve never quite despaired,’ he said,
‘When Fates through darkest pathway led;
I’ve felt, when this sad life was pass’d,
I should find Paradise at last.
Go where I will, do what I would,
This tranquil surety will intrude:
Though cursed and dark the retrospect,
I’m by a mother’s prayers, elect.’
I’m glad, I said, you have not lost
Your faith in woman’s love and trust.
Sad is the lot of him who sees
In her but Satan’s mockeries;
Who looks on her as painted toy,
For lewd caress, ephemeral joy.

“His eyes filled with that tender light
The soul reflects, so soft and bright,
When rising up to look out through
Its window-panes for nearer view;
And when those window-panes it clears
With just a transient dash of tears.

“‘Father,’ he said, with tightening hold,
‘Thank God, I have not lost that trust;
I have one anchor to my soul,
Howe’er the battered bark be tossed.

“‘Through all the heavy night of gloom
The memory of my mother shines,
Above, beyond her southern tomb—
Far back to careless childhood’s times.

“‘Her memory’s like the cedar branch
That, wrapped in coverlet of snow,
Shows greener ’mid the chills that blanch
And check the brooklet’s gurgling flow.

“‘The snow-bird twitters grateful hymns,
Nor all the storm-fiend’s bluster heeds,
As, roofed and rocked by odorous limbs,
He banquets on their manna-seeds.

“‘So flies my tired heart to rest,
From torturing memories of to-day,

Within that sainted cedar-crest
Of her so near, so far away.

“‘And all is peace and shelter there,
Though rage the blinding storms about;
Our spirits meet in mutual prayer,
And sorrow’s lines seem clean rubbed out.

“‘When memory through retrospect
Careers in mad humility,
Nor can for manhood’s foot select
A spot for rest from shame’s stain free;

“‘I look! behold her spirit-lips,
Robed in ethereal gauziness,
So close my longing spirit sips
Bodes of eternal tenderness.’

“Oh, mothers! if you’d know your sphere,
Would point your children heaven’s way,
By precept, pleading, prayer, and tear,
Keep heaven before them every day.

"Go plant your sacred memory,
Hedged round with trees of Paradise,
So close they cannot even see
Between them to the world of vice.

"Next morning, with a favoring wind,
The shores of Cork fell far behind.
Impelled by steam and bellying sail,
We left upon our wake a trail,
A path, the fretting paddles made,
Across the ocean's heaving bed.
But even while we look the seams
Close over it, and smoothly gleams
The glassy surface,—calm, serene,
Leaving no trace where we had been.

"Yet well we knew the shock was felt,
And on the farther shores would pelt;
Would dash, on either shelving side,
In fiercer waves some next month's tide.
Ah, thus, I mused, our fragile barks
Leave faint and transitory marks

An instant on life's ocean, gray,
And then they vanish quite away.
But over on the farther strand,
Where break the waves on Zion-land,
The particles our prows displace
Score the full record of the race.

"At length again our willing feet
Press our own soil, and lo, there greet
Us welcome landmarks: well-known chimes
Wake memories of happier times;
And though the heedless crowds rush on,
Nor greet us, yet we felt that home
Was in the atmosphere around;
Was speaking to us from the ground,
While every whispering flag that flies
Shakes out its welcome on the skies.

"Ural was loath to venture near
Our southern home to me so dear.
I went and sold the treasured shrine,
And here upon the Brandywine

This modest little cottage bought,
And all my chiefest treasures brought,
Save the two forms that silent slept
Beneath where dew-damp flowers wept
Their daily tear-drops o'er the bed,
Fragrant with sweets about it shed.

“For weary months he roamed abroad,
I knew not where his sad feet trod.
At length, on such an eve as this,
At later hour, I felt his kiss
Fall welcome on my brow and cheek
Before my grateful lips could speak.
'Twas just about the time you say
You heard him on that summer day
Within the city's public square—
He must have come straightway from there.

“He went not out throughout the day,
But after nightfall miles away
Upon his favorite steed would ride,
And often till near daybreak bide.

•

At last he came in dreamy mood
To wander 'mongst the rocks and wood,
The blowing flower and clinging vine,
That hedge the murmuring Brandywine.
The stormiest chant 'twould down it roll
Sent gloomiest pleasure to his soul.

“Not half a score of furlongs hence,
Nature constructed ages since,
Above the bowlders huge and rude,
Where man's rash foot has never trod,
A castle, whose smooth, even walls
Unto the line the plummet falls
From fifty feet up in the air
To rugged base, rock-ribbed and bare,
Except for some slow-growing trees,
Lodged in precarious crevices.

“Half down upon its eastern face,
Extending thence to rugged base,
A regular antique portico
Refracts the murmurs, sad and low,

Of the near flowing Brandywine
Through many a wild and tangled vine.
The slipping banks of centuries
Have lodged about its western base
The soil from all the hill-sides 'round,
Till now there is a level ground
Up to its very granite eaves;
And giant trees shake out their leaves,
And deep in the alluvial soil
Extend their rootlets till they coil,
For moisture, round some virgin stone,
Unto all else but them unknown.
From dormer facing to the south
A natural cavern gapes its mouth,
As if some bolt or earthquake shock
Had heaved this solid mass of rock,
In shape of wall, and ceil, and floor,
Long ages, centuries before.

Ural was wont to seek this place
In solitude to spend his days.
Seizing the branches of the trees

He'd swing him down with agile ease,
Until upon the granite top
Of that rude portico he'd drop.
Where, covered by the leafy boughs,
He'd read or ponder, sketch or drowse,
As free from the adventurous world
As though beneath its verdure furled.
For bold the hand and stout the heart
'Twould on that perilous descent start.
The desperate life were held too cheap,
Suspended o'er that craggy steep,
Where one false aim, one breaking bough,
Would hurl him bleeding far below.

"Here for long hours he'd read and think,
And even sleep upon the brink
Of frowning danger, luring death,
That lurked among the crags beneath.
But though so high above the bed,
Where the swift, crooning river sped,
'Twas, on a horizontal line,
Not ten rods to the Brandywine.

Hard by the banks, within its shade,
His crumbling dust has long been laid,
Beneath the arching elms that spread
Their canopy above his bed.
'Twas here Elvandine charmed his sight,—
But she must tell you that to-night.

“The children as he'd walk along,
Abstracted, through their noisy throng,
Would whisper as he passed from sight,
'There goes the Hermit of the Night.'
Mothers a naughty child would quell
By threats of the Night Hermit's spell,
Till they would crouch, in trembling dread,
Their heads beneath the coverlet.
Thus passed his months, disconsolate,
Until the envious hand of fate
Into his heart's dead sea threw in
The forms of love and Elvandine.

“Ah, like one from whose steps there fell
Loose stones into the lake of hell;

Upon whose numbed and tortured ear
The demon's howlings fall so clear,
That slightest stumbling step may take
Him to the bottom of the lake,
Sees light about his pathway gleam,
And wakens from the nightmare dream.

"Scarcely less rapturous the light
That falls on the beclouded sight
Of him whose gloomy pathway lay
Through torturing darkness all the day,
By human glances, tones of love,
That, though they may but transient prove,
Draw back the curtains of the soul
'Till ruddy light shall fill it full—
Feels his new heart to transport given,
And hails that light a ray of heaven.
But I must even hasten on
Through this sad story ; yonder sun
Warns me that it will soon be time
To meet the sorrowing Elvandine.

“Ural had come again to roam,
At times, for weeks away from home;
Again he'd read and write for days,
And scarcely from his desk would raise;
Then wander out for days, amain,
In solitude's deep shades again.

“Sometimes I feared his tortured mind
Had slipped its cable, and the wind
Was driving reason far away
Out of its stormy, boisterous bay.
One day, when he'd been absent weeks,
He stood before me, and there breaks
From his sad eyes a light so wild
I scarcely knew him for my child.
His face was haggard, drawn, and pale
As phantom ship's unearthly sail.
His step was heavy, dull, and slow,
His voice uncertain, weak, and low;
His manner full of wild unrest
That every hour but increased.

•

“I soothed with all the arts I knew
His stormy spirit, and he grew
Toward eventide more calm and still,
And went, responsive to my will,
To his own room to try and rest.
Alas! his feet have never pressed
Those stairs, nor through that open door
Since that dark night, and nevermore
His quick, impatient step I'll hear,
Like soothing music on my ear.

“His room, the one you had last night,
Was first to catch the morning light;
The northern wall is founded on
The margin of a bed of stone
That sinks, in natural ravine,
Full thirty feet below the green,
Where rocks abrupt and rugged sleep,
Cruel and craggy, wild and steep.
The window open to the floor
(With balcony impending o'er),
Fenced round with iron railing, stands.

A pebble, dropped by wilful hands,
Would fall upon the granite bed .
Through which a trickling stream is led.

“’Twas on a June night such as this,
Each flower seemed to wave its kiss,
And, wooed by errant zephyr’s sigh,
Out on some fragrant mission fly.
I took my meerschaum pipe and sat
With Ural for an hour’s chat;
How long we talked I do not know,
But when, at length, I rose to go,
Again there broke that wild unrest
Of surging misery in his breast.

“Just like some gentle, purling rill,
Dammed by adventurous boys, until
Its gathering volume sweeps in wrath
The rude obstructions from its path;
No hand will stay its madness then
Till sunken to its bed again.
Walking with fierce, impatient stride,

His lips curled in defiant pride,
Up to that fateful window, there,
He threw the sash high up in air,
And each word from his lips there fell,
Is printed here indelible.

• “I had no thought to check the stream
Of fierce, weird, wailing words that seem
At times so tired, so full of trust,
Again, like wail of spirit lost.
I thought him in a wayward mien,
Rehearsing some remembered scene,
Where by his matchless eloquence
He'd won a life by hot defence.
These are the words, as line for line,
They're graven on this heart of mine:

“‘Get down! Come in! I know you well,
You're fiends to drag me down to hell;
You're heralded by sulphurous smell,
You fret the night with demon yell,
You shun the light for demon cell;

Like sound-waves quavering from the bell
That dirges midnight on the dell,
You come with your accursed spell.

“‘I see you occupy my chair,
Mock at my reverend father, there;
I see you wriggling in the air,
I feel you writhing through my hair;
Clutching, with heated claws and bare,
My face and neck, my bosom tear.
I see you hurl my pictures rare,
Mementoes, books of love, despair
Out in the glen for dogs to tear—
You’re filling space up everywhere.

“‘I see you dropping from the trees,
And dangling from the cottage eaves,
And grinning through the lattices;
You’re floating on the stifling breeze,
You’re clutching, writhing, ’round my knees;
I see you dancing through the lees
Of wine-drops oozing from the press;

And 'all the waters of the lake,
Lip-lipping 'gainst the shores that break,
Cannot avail to quench or slake
These hellish, molten tides you roll
Through every fibre of my soul.

“I hear you hiss, you point with shame
At one poor boy who bears my name;
I see you with your poisoned tine
Strike at the breast of Elvandine.
Ha! ha! why shrink your palsied hands?
Ha! ha! see how your baleful wands
Turn back and pierce your demon breasts,
While she, pure darling, sweetly rests,
Guarded by angels all her own,
Sweet, special escort, still sleeps on.
Ha! ha! ten thousand devils, dead,
Fall hellwards from about her bed.

“I'll have revenge, you grinning thief,
Of all this demon band the chief.
Dare you not come for me alone?

Then with your imps and devils come
In through this window to my room.
I'll meet you, fight you hand to hand,
In fierce death combat—fiend to man.
Curse, grimace, grin that hellish leer,
I fear you not—I am dead to fear.
Ah, now you come, and thus—No! No!
Wriggling, beyond my grasp you go.

“‘Nay! Nay! Fear not! I do but jest;
Come in. I'll treat you as a guest.
Come in, and eat, and drink, and rest,
In mock warfare let us contest.
Come drink a social glass with me,
We'll raise such riot, revelry,
As shall seduce your fiendish throng
From hell to howl our drinking song.

“‘You won't? Then come as near again,
Though you are hovering o'er the glen;
I'll meet you in your fields of air,
And fight the final battle there.

I'll rid the world of you, and then
It were a Paradise for men.
I'll drag your throttled carcass down
To your eternal caves of gloom ;
You're warned, defied, so now prepare,
I come to meet you in the air.'

"And then, as though the empty air
Were full of demon forms he'd tear,
And scatter, piecemeal, on the ground,
He cleared the lattice with a bound ;
Sprang with clutched hands and hard-set teeth
Out on the jagged rocks beneath—
A heavy, sickening thud, and then
A silence brooded o'er the glen.
Fast as my aged feet could pace
I hurried down, with pallid face,
Calling for help upon the stairs,
Calling for higher aid in prayers.

"My serving-man had heard the fall,
And rashly down the dangerous wall

Leaped till he reached the craggy bed
Where Ural's mangled form was laid,
And raised him, bleeding, from the ground;
Before my tardier feet had found
A safe descent to the rude glen,
He'd brought him half-way out again.
In his strong, faithful arms he bore
His bleeding burden through the door,
And laid him, senseless, on his bed,
Then straightway for a surgeon sped.
But human skill was all in vain,
Save slightly to assuage the pain.
An arm was fractured, shoulder bruised,
Ribs dislocated, head contused;
His legs were broke in many a place—
But not a scratch had marked his face.

“Before the surgeon came he turned—
His eyes with yearning love-light burned—
And with a painful effort said,
‘Father, bend down your reverend head,
And let me bless you for the care,

And love, and pain, and toil, and prayer
You've showered on your hapless son,
Whose earthly course so near is run.
Ere yet my spirit hies it home,
Let dear Elvandine hither come;
I'll buy an hour of blissful love,
With all these pangs, the blest above
Should envy me, could envy swell
Their sated souls who yonder dwell.'

"She came. Her beauty, bright and young,
Was bathed in tender tears that hung
Upon her lashes as she stooped,
As though a wayward tress she looped.
Then brightly rising up again—
As if her tears might cause him pain—
His hand 'twixt her small palms she slips,
And stooping, kissed his grateful lips.
For the long days death angels stood,
Eager to launch him on the flood,
She gently pressed his pulseless wrist,
His languid, pallid lips she kissed;

Clung, anguished, to his listless hand,
And held him on the border-land.
At last death conquered, and he sped
Across the portals of the dead.
His spirit, fragrant with her kisses,
Scaled the embattled precipices,
And winging through empyrean blue,
Took heaven with it as it flew.

"I wondered not his glazing eyes
Turned to that spot of Paradise:
That memory-cherished scene, where first
Her beauty on his vision burst.
I marveled not he made request
His crumbling body there might rest.
'Tis sweet to think when we are dead
The feet of those we love may tread
Above us, and their gentle tears
Fall tenderly through fading years.
But there's a holier reason why
This spot was cherished sacredly.

Oh, there is not on all the earth
One spot of so divine a birth
As that dear spot where first we meet
Love borne to us on fateful feet.

“Down through the after-hours of life,
Through all its sorrow, toil, and strife,
One picture, burned upon my heart,
Is of my inner life a part.
The warring world can never shake it,
Time’s friction can but brighter make it;
Part of my life, ’twill share with me
The cycles of eternity.
Though dimmed my eyes and seamed my brow,
That picture stands before me now
As clear as on that autumn day
So many miles and years away.
’Tis on my heart; where since, before,
Fair portraits flitted by the score,
To linger for a year, a day,
Then in oblivion fade away.

"'Twas on an Indian summer noon,
The sun looked like a burning moon,
Through atmosphere of haze and smoke;
The languor-breeding babel broke
From lazy echoes on the street
To time the tread of lazier feet.
I felt my heart and pulses thrill,
I knew not whence nor why, until
There flashed on my bewildered eyes
A truant child from Paradise.

"I see her now. The bricks she trod
Were sacred to the jostling crowd,
Who, parting, left upon the street
The path of light marked by her feet.
From every brick she pressed there rose
Such incense as the censer throws,
To mingle with the atmosphere,
And leave its fragrance on the air.

"As when the angels all the day
Have trodden o'er the milky-way,

Till their light footfalls breaking through
The gauzy ceil of heaven's blue,
Leave eyelets for celestial light
To flood our gloomy world all night—
So marked the tripping of her feet,
Their radiant pathway down the street,
As quick, successive meteor lights
Flash through the firmament of nights.

“Swiftly she passed me, but her hair,
Her form, her carriage, features rare,
Were stamped upon my heart by fate,
As burns the camera on the plate.
The negative, retouched by love,
Is registered and stored above.

“Her eyes were lustrous, liquid jet,
In milky orbits floating set,
With silky, flowing fringes lashed ;
On my bewildered gaze they flashed,
On my enraptured senses shine,
As half terrestrial, all divine ;

Then fall before my greedy gaze,
And vanish through the autumn haze.

“How oft to silence fancy’s cry
I’ve sought that spot these years gone by.
In vain; the walls are lifeless brick—
The hurrying crowds are just as thick,
But all the scene is full of gloom
As midnight is without her moon;
As embers dead and strewn about,
On dreary hearth with fires gone out.
The background, though as passing fair,
Is lit by no bright picture there
To match the scene intact I find
Graved on my heart, burned in my mind.

“Memory may store a thousand things
That go and come on wilful wings;
There’s only one that comes to stay
To the remotest far away.
Ah, mortal! you have never loved,
Else had your heart the passion proved

By storing every wall or brook,
Or mountain path or arbor nook,
Or flower or shrub, or tree or stone,
Where first you met the fateful one.
Though other scenes may come and go,
As floating mist or drifting snow,
There's one alone that comes to stay
To the remotest far away;
And that—it is the spot where first
Her beauty on your vision burst.

“Go, tell me not you've loved me long,
Through weal and woe, through right and wrong;
But let me see if you forget
The scene—its features where we met:
The city street, the orchard sweet,
The seaside slope, or mountain top,
And that will tell me truer than
Ten thousand oaths, impulsive, can.”

THE AUTHOR'S STORY.

THE weary bees whose heavy feet,
Clogged with their tolls of stolen sweet,
Bore down their wings beneath the load,
Were taking now their homeward road.
The humming-bird that never brooks
The zenith sun, and rarely looks
Upon the flowers he loves so well
Until the dew has damped each cell,
Has his gay, restless wings astir,
Beating the perfumed evening air,
Among the bowers and lattice cleats,
Sipping, by turns, their choicest sweets.

The great mill-wheel had ceased its play,
And work was over for the day;
The factory hands were hurrying on,
Along their several pathways home.
The broad-faced sun was gliding down,
With scarce an hour's course to run

Before the angels of the night
With their dark tresses veil his light,
Ere pouring out their horns of gloom
The silent, sleeping world upon ;
These, night's dark billows to outride,
Those, to flow outward with the tide.

The patriarch clasped his sturdy cane,
And led me out the rocky lane
That sloped toward gifted Ural's shrine,
To keep our tryst with Elvandine.
In silence next to gloom we go ;
Naught but the murmuring river's flow,
The music which the far cascade
Among the echoing caverns made,
The twittering of the birds above,
Among the branches of the grove,
Was heard throughout the silent glen—
Nature was posed for sleep again.

At length vague sounds, so low and sweet
And mournful, our charmed senses greet,

That we were fain to pause and listen
Till tear-drops on our lashes glisten.
For as by skilful hands the bow
Across the strings leads memory through
The curtained chambers of the soul,
Till sombre musings lose control,
So fell that wailing voice on us,
Drawn by the chantress' hand across
The chords responsive in our souls,
Till all our senses it enthralls,
And every mournful note that starts
Finds its swift echo in our hearts.

"'Tis Elvandine," the father said,
"Wailing above her Ural's bed.
Step yonder to that poplar-tree
Beyond the curve, and you will see
Her swinging in her rustic chair
The loving mill-hands planted there,
Beside the mound and near its head,
Whereon her fragrant tears are shed ;

Built so 'twill rock her back and forth,
Face east or west, or south or north ;
A canopy above her thrown,
To shield her from the rain and sun."
I took my place beside the tree,
This is the sight that greeted me :
The sweet face of the night before,
More sweetly sad in its contour,
Looking with loving eyes upon
The grave where her young heart was sown.
Sown with a lavish hand, and free
To germ in immortality ;
Sown 'neath the coffin lid and sod,
To come up when the voice of God,
From out His temple of the skies,
Call to the dead, Awake! arise!

Backward and forward, slowly swayed,
Her gaze not for an instant strayed
From the dear sleeper by her side,
Rocked this expectant heaven-bride.

Strewing a flower here and there
About his head, with murmured prayer—
As if her soul rose from the sod
But to ascend to throne of God—
She broke into another lay
That thrilled through all the fading day,
In the same sadly wondrous chords—
I recollect the very words :

“Sleep! sleep!
Sleep, lordly lover, beneath your green cover,
Where the wild wailing stream through deep shadows
 is led ;
'Neath grasses and mosses,
And masses of flosses,
In wild-tangled luxury over you spread.
'Neath redolent showers
Of leaves and of flowers,
The low breathing night-winds shake down on your
 bed,
Sleep! sleep!

“Sleep! sleep!
Sleep, lordly lover, beneath your green cover,
By fate’s mocking tyranny premature thrust.
The echoes that uttered,
And faltering muttered
Your last solemn ritual, “Dust unto dust,”
In muteness unspoken—
Their lips give no token,
Deep frozen in silence, and coated with must.
Sleep! sleep!

“Sleep! sleep!
Sleep, lordly lover, beneath your green cover,
Where the waves dry their tears on each flowering
vine.
Your fond spirit-fingers—
Their loving clasp lingers—
How closely your spirit-arms round me entwine!
Your spirit-lip presses
Long lingering kisses,
That thrill as they cling, heaven-scented, to mine.
Sleep! sleep!

"Sleep! sleep!

Sleep, lordly lover, beneath your green cover;
Fond heaven bend list'ning to Elvandine's cries.
I'm so weary of waiting
The longed-for remating,
When we in our new wedding raiment shall rise,
And pinion to pinion,
Through endless dominion,
Our wedding tour wing through the realms of the
skies.
Sleep! sleep!"

The voice in sympathetic echoes died
Among the shelving rocks where it had hied,
In voluntary duty, to rehearse
The faithful spirit of each wailing verse
To Dryad, who, with pens of pointed steel,
Wrote there what only judgment shall reveal,
With pitying look, the words of this lone one
Among the caverns of eternal stone.

When silent was the scratching echo-pen
The patriarch gently took my arm again;

Clearing his voice to warn her that we come—
We stood with Elvandine beside the tomb.
There were no tear-drops in her great, sad eyes,
But, oh! the tears were vocal in her sighs,
And every motion of lip, hand, and head
Was fraught with deluges of tears unshed.
Her steed, that unchecked, grazed about at will,
Perceiving now the wailing voice astill,
As was his wont, came gently up, and laid
Upon her tender arm his faithful head.
And she began, remarking it grew late,
Without prelude, her story to relate:

ELVANDINE'S STORY.

"'Tis just three years this very day,
And I was fresh from school away,
With all a school-girl's scorn of rules
Of social or pedantic schools.
With some young friends I gayly strolled
Along the rockland, race, and wold;

'Mid words of song and jest and cheer,
We held a romping picnic here.

“ We spread a table 'twixt these trees
That shield him now from sun and breeze;
While some spread out our baskets full,
I organized a mimic school.
A dozen girls ranged on the grass
Before me in mimetic class,
While I, with goggles on my eyes,
Plied them with questions. Their replies,
So full of the ridiculous,
Turned all the sleeping echoes loose
In mirth, so rollicking and gay,
The frightened sparrows fled away.

“ Yonder, high up among the eaves
Of that rude castle 'mongst the leaves,
Within the dizzy fields of air,
Ural was lying, silent, there.
A girl shrieked out in mock affright,
'Look there! the Hermit of the Night

With all the heedless lack of fears
A school-girl feels at sixteen years,
I rose, and gravely bowing, said,
'Thou roseate deity o'erhead,
Shower the boon of careless mirth
On us dull creatures here of earth!'

"Though high above, the lightest word
From here could be distinctly heard.
He spoke not, but I saw him pluck
A leaf from memorandum book,
And then with pencil swiftly write,
As though an answer he'd indite.
It seemed but scarce a little minute
Ere he had rolled a pebble in it,
Tied it securely, firm and neat,
And deftly tossed it to my feet.
I read and found he prayed to pass
Examination for my class:

"'There was a little school-teacher,
As mild and sedate as a preacher,

Her wonderful eyes
Shamed the stars in the skies,
She seemed an adorable creature.
There was an old hermit of forty,
He was ugly, and awkward, and haughty,
He gazed at her till
His heart wouldn't stand still,
He didn't know it was naughty.
One evening he tossed her a letter,
He deemed it politer and better
Than to rudely come down
And frighten her home—
In privacy, please, keep his letter.'

"That letter was such mingled sense
Of mirth, and wit, and impudence
That we were fain to laugh aloud;
And then the fearless, romping crowd,
As with a common voice and tone,
Commissioned me to ask him down.
He heard, and with chivalric tact
Saved me from the ungentle act.

Arising gracefully and slow,
He sprang and clutched the nearest bough.
Quickly from limb to limb he dropped,
Till on some rocky ledge he stopped;
Then vaulting to the nearest trees,
Again was dropping through the leaves
From branch to branch, so sure and fleet,
He soon stood, bowing, at our feet.

“His garb, though fine, was careless worn,
In many a place by twig was torn.
He wore a tasselled smoking-cap,
A flowered cashmere study-wrap,
And high-topped boots, and vest cut low,
And linen white as untrod snow.
But not a jewel decked his hands,
Or shone on bosom, neck, or bands.

“His hair was tangled as the locks
Of crow-foot vine among the rocks.
His eyes gleamed like a sudden fire
Rebuilt, but to again expire,

Upon some sacred altar's fane;
Deluged by flooding storms of rain
That drowned the simmering fires out,
And strewed the embers all about.

"His voice was sad, but sweet and deep,
Like warrior talking in his sleep;
The care-lines, traced in either cheek,
Smiled every time he'd laugh or speak.
About his mouth an auburn wreath
Half hid his even, pearly teeth;
While just a touch of color speaks
Of health upon his bronzed cheeks.

"His manner was so grave and kind,
So gentle, courteous, and refined,
So full of chastened gayety,
We bade farewell to prudery,
And laughed, and talked, and chattered on ,
As they who've years each other known.
At his request my mimic class
I ranged again upon the grass.

“His answers showed acquaintances
With all the abstruse sciences,
But in such comic words were given
Our aching sides with mirth were riven.
Yielding at length to our request,
He took my place to teach the rest.
And matters which had seemed at school
As fathomless as some dark pool
In cavern place, became as plain
As rainbow after evening rain.

“And when there came the supper call,
The romping maidens, one and all,
Surrounded him with one accord,
And pressed him, laughing, to the board.
With reverent hands he hid his face,
And called a brief and silent grace;
And then, as with enchanting spell,
His words of wit and wisdom fell,
Like showers on the thirsty earth,
Refreshing all our hearts with mirth.

Anon to higher, better things,
He'd woo our souls to plume their wings.

"One girl more willful than the rest,
All sorts of heedless queries pressed.
Said she, 'Sir Hermit, tell us, please,
What love is—who his devotees?'
A painful quiver of the lashes,
Then instantaneous humor flashes
Athwart his face and through his eyes,
As, with grave drollery, he replies:

"'Love is molasses, honey-drip,
'Stilled from a school-girl's nectar lip;
Some youth, untutored, stoops to sip,
Jove, laughing, hurls a thunderbolt,
The lips refuse to loose their hold.
The pair stand like electric poles,
While the sweet thrill, magnetic, rolls
From head to titillating toes, and
Holds them in sweet petrescence frozen ;

Pulse, tendon, muscle paralyzed—
Love is molasses magnetized.

“‘Love is a lithe witch-hazel rod
That spins, divining, o’er the sod
With many a quick gyrating nod;
Calls from the north, south, east and west,
Unto your side him you love best.
If it divines right, good and well,
If wrongly, better not to tell.
Shake off your bonds, the courts will do it,
If you insist and say you rue it;
Hang out your sign, “Wanted, a fool”—
This love is of a modern school.

“‘Love is a fever in the veins,
Pulses run riot, mad with pains,
As brooklet wild with freshet rains.
The doctor comes. “Hold out your tongue;”
He shakes his head. “There’s nothing wrong;
A trifling cold; tie up your head,
Bandage your throat, and go to bed.”

The father, in more serious vein,
"How pale you are! Are you in pain?
Bilious! ten grains of calomel,
And keep your room till you are well."

"Without a sigh or glance or yawn,
Mamma sits silent till they're gone,
Her chair near by her daughter's drawn;
For she has felt the painful thrill,
And its sweet memory lingers still.
A smile hid in her loving eyes,
She counsels air and exercise.
The maid finds exercise in rest,
A broadcloth bandage round her pressed.
Now neither you nor I approve
Such mode of rest—but this is love.

"Love is an expert in the art
Of juggling with the human heart
For plaudits on the public mart.
I've known of girls who ne'er had won
Applause for deftly tossing one,

Grow so expert that, quivering there,
They'd hold a dozen in the air,
And yet have time for keeping tryst,
And adding dozens to their list.
I think we all applaud this kind,
For this is love, and love is blind.

“Love is a game of forfeits, where
Caresses, kisses, pleading, prayer,
Wild oaths of fealty, here and there,
Which he has loaned before they're wed,
Must afterwards by her be paid.
Lucky the favored man who lives
Till he in full the debt receives!
Unless, with pleading and caresses,
For bonnets, laces, gloves, and dresses
She sues, on interest-bearing bond,
A spouse of that kind, none too fond,
'Twould take ten after-years and more
To pay one hour's debt before.
And long ere that the generous claimant
Forgives the debt, declines the payment,

Sighing for peace, all things above—
But all the same, they call this love.

“‘Love is, like genius, never made,
Nor bought with gold and silver paid,
But born with pinions ready made,
And sent forth at each mortal's birth,
To traverse to remotest earth
For that new soul's dear complement.
And though by oceans, empires rent,
Though mountain ranges intervene,
Though trackless deserts stretch between,
'Twill hover, restless, night and day,
Guided in its impatient way,
Till looking through some upturned eyes,
The dear elected ones it spies.

“‘Forthwith that lonely soul will feel
A vague unrest upon it steal;
And thence, alike through woe and weal,
Will follow love's full pillared light
Of cloud by day, of fire by night,

.

Till the elected beings stand
Face unto face, and hand in hand;
While says the throbbing of each heart,
“ We’ve met at last, to never part;
Go these frail bodies severally,
Our souls are joined for aye and aye!”

“ ‘ Mayhap you’ll never need to roam,
Mayhap the search, adjoining home,
Is ended ere it’s quite begun.
Perhaps you’ve plighted prattling troth,
And the same cradle rocked you both;
Or you have met when, all too late,
Your hands were manacled by fate.
Sometimes to love in spectacles
The fervent glance its mission tells;
From hard cheek-bones and shrunken lips
Its “ better-late-than-never” sips.

“ ‘ Perhaps your elect one even now,
With ardent soul, impatient brow,
Is seeking you; but you will know
Him when he comes, for never yet

Did heart deceive or soul forget.
But, careless maiden, go and pray
That love may tarry many a day
In some far clime, and peace, instead,
Its lulling wings above you spread.
For when you once have felt the pain
You'll never more know rest again.
You couldn't, maiden, if you would,
And then you wouldn't if you could.
Now, hear! by all the blest above,
This only, this alone, is love!

“His face, as changeful as his muse,
Now smiling, then with passion glows;
But even in his gayest smile
Lurked there a saddened shadow still.
One universal shadow crept
Across the earth, and, stretching, slept.
So swiftly had the hours passed
The night was coming all too fast,
And, loath to leave his company,
We bade the Hermit kind good-by.

“That night I had a vision bright:
I dreamed the Hermit of the Night
In his strong arms was bearing me
To island in some far-off sea.
I did not care to note the way
We came, I knew I meant to stay;
I laid my head upon his breast,
And sank into a blissful rest.

“I struggled not when kisses fell,
Too sweetly violent to tell,
On my parched lips, that ached for more,
When lo! a knocking at the door
Waked me from rapturous dreams too soon.
A light was gleaming through my room,
‘Fire! Fire!’ was ringing through the gloom;
The factory bell’s uncertain tune
Was wildly clanging its despair
Upon the lurid, midnight air.

“A mill down by the river side
Was rushing out upon the tide

Of angry flame, and smoke, and spark,
Into the kingdom of the dark.

I rose at once and soon was dressed,
Mingling, affrighted, with the rest,
Who gazed upon the flames so high,
Painting their wrath against the sky.

“And now my very blood was froze,
Such an unearthly scream arose;
A drunken mother in the crowd,
With gesture wild and wailing loud,
Bemoaned her crippled child, who slept
In the high, burning loft. They’d crept
To stealthy sleep the night away,
And leave before the dawn of day.

“The mill stood by the river’s edge,
Built hard upon a craggy ledge;
The lazy water at its base
Scarce found, for rocks, a resting-place.
The lurid flames leaped up the wall,
Broke through the window like a pall;

The black smoke wrapped the fated pile,
And curled about the crippled child,
Who at the lofty window stood,
With frantic pleading to the crowd;
The stairways burning fast beneath,
And she seemed doomed to fiery death.

“ Women were weeping, men were dumb,
And then there rose a distant hum,
A murmur in the livid crowd;
A voice that was not shrill nor loud,
But mandatory, fraught with hope,
Called kind but sternly, ‘Bring a rope!’
A giant oak of centuries
Stood out among the margining trees,
And threw one mighty limb half-way,
High up, across the waters’ play.

“ A rope was brought, a line was thrown
Across the branch, and soon fell down
Upon the other side, and then
Was hauled by hands of willing men.

Scarce was it down, ere hand o'er hand,
Ural ran up and tied each strand
Securely round the faithful bough,
Then fleetly down again; and now,
Looping the end about his chest,
High up a farther tree he pressed.

“Pausing the briefest instant there,
He swung out through the heated air,
Alighted on the smoking sill,
The rope around his body still,
And stood beside the periled child,
Who clung to him in terror wild.
Across his shoulders, firm but loose,
Like Indian mother her pappoose,
He bound the child and through the smoke
Again his breathless air-flight took.

“Whether he failed to grasp the limb,
Whether his bonds impeded him,
I never knew; but back he swung,
Toward where so many a lurid tongue

Shot up above the burning pile,
Loosing his chest and hand the while.
Just as he touched the building's edge,
He threw a hand against the ledge,
And changed his course athwart the river,
Dropped, sank, alas! I feared forever.

"His aim was certain, for he fell
Where floods had mined their deepest well
In all the centuries of time
Beneath the restless Brandywine.
He rose, and in an instant more
Was swimming strongly to the shore.
Oh, such a shout as rent the air!
He was the only calm one there.
I was so wild I could not speak,
But went and madly kissed his cheek.

"And not a woman in the crowd
But wildly begged to be allowed
To kiss his hand or bless his head.
It was too much for him, he fled;

But ever since that awful night
He's been the Hermit of the Light.
He's had for children no alarms,
They ran, but 'twas into his arms,
And often have I seen them strew
His path with sweetest flowers that grew.

“For days my very soul was pressed
With vague imaginings of unrest;
I loved to muse in quiet place,
But his would always be the face
That stood so near me I could see
The sad smile limned on vacancy;
Through every daylit hour 'twould gleam,
And stand sweet sentry when I'd dream.
I strove to find my ill in vain,
Though 'twas the sweetest kind of pain;
I would not change it if I could,
I knew I could not if I would;
For now I knew it was love's fever,
So fierce it must burn on forever.

“Strange how a girl’s untutored mind
A name for this disease can find,
When not the pulses of her wrist,
By wisest doctor’s fingers pressed,
Nor sign upon her tongue reveal
Disease he’d strive in vain to heal.
Can it be love’s magnetic poles,
Joining two always kindred souls,
Flash fires through hearts ecstatic riven,
From battery that’s stored in heaven,
And bear its message from above
‘Be not afraid, for I am love’?

“Now every evening through the ranks
Of trees and flowers on these banks,
My maiden aunt accompanying me,
I’d stroll in hope that I might see
The gleam of his deep azure eyes,
Brighter than stars in Paradise.
Ah! what will flush with deeper glow
O’er maiden’s cheek, and neck, and brow,

Than a brief glance from him she loves,
Though transient, as he onward moves?

“Sometimes we’d meet him on the stile,
Sometimes he’d stop to chat awhile,
And then my fluttering heart would rest
In scared contentment in my breast.
I knew my eyes had told him this,
And, oh, the surging seas of bliss
That rioted my being through,
And drowned my breath; I, happy, knew
That his fond heart was all my own,
And pulsed and beat for me alone.

“For, oh, there is a spark divine
That from the secret soul will shine;
Will flame up through the kindling eye,
And all the force of will defy.
Go guard your lips as well you may,
Your eyes the secret will betray;
Guard every pressure of your hand,
Stern sentry o’er each action stand,

Love, undismayed, defiant, will
Shine smiling through your lashes still;
And while the maiden knows it well,
She longs to hear the dear one tell.

“One evening, walking forth alone,
My maiden aunt too ill to come,
He overtook me on the beach,
My fluttered heart too wild for speech.
He saw and pitied my distress,
And talked of flowers, fashion, dress;
Limned pictures of bright imagery,
Full of strange whim and mimicry,
Until I was myself again;
And, walking homeward down the glen,
He drew my arm within his own
To guard me from a ledge of stone.

“But oh, that touch! I feel it still
Through every nerve and fibre thrill,
Till every string and tendon quiver—
I wished it could endure forever.

He walked with me up to the gate,
Bade me good-by, said it was late,
And asked me, urged on me to keep
Within my room and try to sleep.
As though he'd have me think, forsooth,
He had not guessed the whole dear truth,
And knew, as angels knew above,
My sickness was of too sweet love.
To my own room in glad consent,
Obedient to his wish, I went.

“I went, but not to sleep—to dream,
All my rapt visions were of him.
My pride rebelled that I should leave
My passion pinned upon my sleeve.
For though I knew his heart was mine,
Never by word, or act, or sign;
Never by faintest of caresses,
Never by willing hand he presses.
As far as chivalry might shun,
He'd seemed to strive to be alone.

Only his sweet, sad eyes had told,
The flaming secret of his soul.

“Mark how yon chafing eagle tries
To his blue ether fields to rise!
His wings are free but weighted down,
His feet with grievous fag of stone;
His weary pinions pulsing slow
As in yon race the waters flow.
So tardy time, when lovers part,
Seems to delay until the heart
Ties all its grievous weight of woe
His lazy, flapping wings below;
Till daylight ages seems to be,
And every night eternity.

“We met no more for many a day,
For suddenly he went away;
Even his father knew not where—
I could but follow him with prayer.
Alas! I knew not what to think,
I stood upon distraction’s brink;

The secret in my heart aswell,
Too dear to keep, too sweet to tell—
This torturing, sweetened ecstasy
Was all I had to solace me.
I feared his spirit, rash and brave,
Might goad him to untimely grave.
And yet what could a maiden do
To find such lover e'er so true?
Nothing but bind full heavier woe
To time, and make him slower go.
But, oh! I knew, whate'er befall,
He loved me, loved me—that was all.

“At last we heard he was at home;
Not well, they said, and did not roam,
As wont, among the solitudes
Of echoing rocks and whispering woods;
Shunned his high perch on danger's brow,
The 'Hermit's Lodge' they call it now,
Though it had stood the ages' shock
In homelier title of 'Will's Rock.'”

“One evening, late in aftermath,
We strolled along the gravelled path
That by his father’s cottage led—
He sat beside the door and read.
And he, the courtliest of men,
Could not but choose to greet us then.
As he came smiling to the gate,
I cared not then how dark the fate
That o’er my future furled its pall,
I knew he loved me—that was all.

“Expressing joy at his return,
Oh! how I felt my fierce love burn!
I added, lightly as I could,
For my grave aunt beside me stood,
‘Sir Hermit, pray, what do you there?’
‘Dreaming,’ he said, ‘some child of air
Is playing on my troubled brain
To ease me of a transient pain.’
I said, half grave, half playfully,
‘Then dream to-night, for once, of me;
And, mark you, when the daylight gleams

I shall expect to know your dreams.'
In his deep, thrilling tones he said,
'You've but to speak to be obeyed;'
While, all unconscious, glow his eyes,
Like thunderbolts that down the skies
From Jove's imperial armory fall;
I knew he loved me—that was all.

"Next day, an hour before the noon,
They brought a letter to my room,
And said that Ural Regneigh sent
It, with his courtliest compliment.
Ah! who shall tell the pride of her,
Whose pulses wild and heart astir,
As runs a mad affrighted horse
Adown some smooth, steep-graded course,
Regards as message from above
The first dear letter from her love?

"There are some joys too sweet to come
But once in life, and this is one.
No wonder that she lets it lie,

Then turns it over tenderly,
Then wonders what the dear one's said,
When long ago she might have read.
Then, famished, reads it o'er, and then
Wonders how soon he'll write again.
Thus while my eyes, delighted, gleam
With joy and pride, I read his dream :

URAL'S DREAM.

“ ‘ELVANDINE told me I must dream
When I resumed my slumbers,
And having nothing else to do,
I thought I'd dream in numbers.
So I threw my head to Morpheus,
And at my dreaming went,
But found 'twas not a thing of will,
Obedience, or consent.
Nothing daunted, I kept trying
Until almost break of day,
For I knew I'd have to tell her,

And I'd not know what to say.
In the hush before the dawning,
Ere the first gray streak had gleamed,
I obeyed her tyrant mandate,
And I'll tell you what I dreamed:

“‘I was standing by the river,
Flowing on and on forever,
Staying, resting, stopping never,
Rushing, roaring, foaming on.
On its restless current sweeping,
Over ripples, gayly leaping,
I could see the driftwood meeting
In the morning's herald dawn.
Drifting with the current ever,
Onward, forward, backward never;
Waifs upon the waters merely,
Thrown together very nearly
By the swift, resistless tide;
Outward toward the sea they glide,
Swiftly onward, side by side.

“‘Two from ’mongst the others gliding,
Flashing, romping, and colliding,
Nearer shore came gayly riding;
Then they meet, and now they sever,
In the current of the river,
Up and down and on forever.
Like two voyagers they seem,
Each the other’s voyage blessing;
I could fancy they were kissing,
I could fancy them caressing,
And coquetting on the stream.
Waifs upon the waters merely,
Thrown together very nearly
By the swift, resistless tide;
Onward toward the sea they glide,
Swiftly onward, side by side.

“‘Suddenly new form assuming,
As the sun lit up the glooming,
All the waters ’round illuming—
One a maiden, bright and blooming,
Glowing cheek and flashing eye,

Form as light, and lithe, and airy,
Motion graceful, gliding, wary,
As the storied sylvan fairy,
And the other—was it I?
Ah! the sun arose too early,
Ere my dream had told me fairly.
Waifs upon life's waters merely,
Thrown together very nearly
By the swift, remorseless tide;
Could the fates reveal more clearly
That we journey side by side?

“No! for while I fondly waited
For the bark so precious freighted,
Even then I knew me fated—
It was drifting surely by.
Only then her arms caressed me,
Only then her fresh lips blessed me,
Kissed, and said a sad good-by.
Then was gone and left me standing,
Lone and tearful on the landing,
Till the curving of the river

Shut her from my gaze forever,
And the turf wailed "Nevermore!"
To my cry that waked the echoes,
Weird-like, on the farther shore.
Waifs upon life's waters merely,
Thrown together very nearly
By the swift, resistless tide,
Can't we journey side by side?
While your kiss is fresh upon me,
While your blessing's newest on me,
Ere you turn away and shun me,
Wake me ere you leave the shore—
Wake me. I would dream no more.'

* * * * *

"The sun was high in the blue-arched dome,
And flooded my room through the screen,
And rippled, and dimpled, and danced on the floor,
When I wakened out of my dream.
I arose and dressed, and laughed at my fears,
But the vision was all too true,
For never again in all these years
Has the bark drifted back into view.

And the turn in the river's as sudden and short
And as distant as ever of yore ;
The echoes are tossing my cry in their sport
Through the glens of the far-away shore,
And the turf wails "“ Nevermore !””

“I knew, alas! too well I knew,
My vague misgivings all too true.
He'd tried to tell, yet spare my pain,
That loving him were all in vain ;
That some dark fate, like hideous screen,
Between our lives must intervene.
But, oh! to recompense for this,
I had the more than mortal bliss
Of knowing I was loved again,
That compensated all the pain.

“Perhaps I hoped the future might
Strip off the cerements of night
That clung between us, and that fate,
Relenting, might be kind, though late.
For hope will live till heart be dead,

And in the tomb of lover laid.
I never asked what accident,
Or ruthless deed such gloom had lent
To hedge his life with fateful wall,
I knew he loved me—that was all.
That love, like the assayer's art,
Would melt the drosses from his heart;
All his great nature would refine,
And make his life a part of mine;
Or if it made mine part of his,
Though banned and fated, that were bliss.

“I cared not what his past had been,—
Dire with misfortune, black with sin;
I cared not if his hands were dark
With human blood, Cain's cursed mark;
I cared not if his blistered lip
With fever-drops of perjury drip;
His life enwrapped in baleful fog—
I cared not if the decalogue
He'd broken, trampled one and all,
I knew he loved me—that was all.

“The days passed like a fevered dream ;
But, oh ! so sadly sweet they seem
As tortured memory glances back
Along their blasted, blackened track,
I'd not with the most favored one,
Whose love matured 'neath nurturing sun,
Barter my love in darkness sown,
Barter my love in shadows grown ;
Barter my lover all unknown,
Barter his name on yon crypt stone,
With all the universe thrown in,
To make the barter even seem.

“Sweeter to dwell in vague unrest,
By dark foreboding dread oppressed ;
Sweeter to lift the veil of gloom,
And see beyond it but the tomb ;
Sweeter to know, oh, thought divine,
His heart, if not his hand, were mine,
Than be the happiest maid whose love,
Cemented here and bless'd above,

Was in the brightest sunlight grown,
And all her lover's record known.

"Next time we met he was so kind,
To my embarrassment so blind;
Such generous and chivalric tact
Pervaded word, and look, and act,
My foolish heart was ready, quite,
To dream he'd found some ray of light
Irradiate the gloomy way,
And show him by its heavenly ray
How in the future, oh! what bliss!
He could be mine, and I be his,
In bonds of holy wedlock given,
In the full sight of man and heaven.

"Thus time, with fever in its veins,
Swept on bequeathing sweetest pains.
One day, when sauntering home, I met
Him gloomier sad than ever yet.
He told me, oh, so sweetly kind,

The curse of his distracted mind ;
And never, while my life affords
Me memory, I'll forget his words :

“ ‘ Elvandine, I can never be
More to your heart than you to me.
But, darling one, there lies between
Our hapless lives so dark a screen,
So high, so thick, of iron fate,
'Twere all in vain to hope or wait.
Had not your love so clearly shown,
I had concealed from you my own.
But I were ingrate, coward, churl,
To let a guileless, artless girl
Give me her heart, and make no sign
To show her she had all of mine ;
To have by shame her bosom burn
For love she knew not met return.
Sweet Elvandine, 'tis hard, but yet
Your lesson must be to forget.
Your happiness could only come

From the dull echoes of the tomb
Of one unfit to live, but aye,
Intensely more unfit to die.

“‘To her, though perjured, man and heaven
Bind me in bonds that can’t be riven,
Lest all the carrion birds of shame
Should batten on the Regneigh name.
I would not on the funeral pyre
Of my cursed life see there expire
Your glorious beauty, hope, and trust,
Though sacred were the mingling dust.
Go call on heaven to grant you strength
To conquer this sweet spell at length;
Go think of me as some dark dream
’Twould o’er your midnight pillow teem.
Go link you to some happier fate;
At heaven’s portals I’ll await
Your spotless soul, for none in heaven
Are married or in marriage given,’
He said, and dashed impulsive on,
And left me standing all alone,

Nor strength nor will to move my feet,
But oh! he loved me—that was sweet.

“I’d known some secret, dark and dread
Like funeral pall, hung round his head;
Some crime, perhaps, I knew not what,
But ah! I’d never thought of that.
Madly I prayed that heaven remove
This barrier to our prosperous love;
And then, in shame and tears repenting,
My soul wept, softening, relenting.
But while with shame my cheek would blush,
Through forehead, neck, and bosom flush,
My heart against stern fate was steeled—
My love and hope I’d never yield.
Sweeter to love him far away
Than bask in heaven’s approving ray;
Sweeter to know his love was mine,
And then—and then—perhaps sometime
The very iron-hearted fate
Might yet relent, not quite too late.
For hope its deathless rays will shed,

And love will live till hope is dead.
But hope is born in Paradise,
Immortal is, and never dies.

“Thus time fled on, and day by day
Hid in eternity away.
E’en pain was sweetened with the thought
Of mutual love, though darkly fraught
And widely parted, widowed, riven,
By ban of earth and doom of heaven;
I’d ceased to strive against the spell
Of love I never dared to tell.
I never hoped his hand to press,
Never expected one caress;
Never, in wildest reveries,
Dreamed his dear lips should drink my sighs.

“One eve I met him riding down
From Rising Sun, a hamlet town;
The day was stormy, but the rain
Had ceased; the evening sun again
Was calling to the drooping flowers

To rise up from their bath of showers.
His horse was plashing through the mud,
And high above his head it threw
A sleet of plastic mire that fell
O'er rider, fleeting steed as well.
Perceiving me in his mad ride,
His tempered pace slack'd to my side.

“His face was sad, and drawn, and stern;
His eyes in fitful flashes burn,
His voice seemed cold, yet far from rude,
As though in a defiant mood.
He strove to show me how my love
Was banned on earth and doomed above;
Said it was wrong, unmaidenly,
For maid to love such waif as he.
Appealed to duty, honor, pride,
Hoped to see me another's bride;
Hoped reason would resume her sway,
This fitful dream soon pass away;
That I should grow to think of him
As some unworthy phantom, dim,

And growing dimmer with the years;
Till I could laugh at girlish tears,
And wonder how my heart had flown
To one unworthy and unknown.

“‘Yes, sir!’ ‘No, sir!’ and ‘Certainly!’
I lisped in startled modesty.
I dared not speak, but drooped my head
To hide the glint of tears unshed,
That even pride could not repress
O’er this young tomb of tenderness.
For oh! I cared not for the ban
Of heaven, nor the boon of man.
I cared not if the continent
Stretched ’twixt our lives; I was content,
Let what in direst fate befall,
So that he loved me—that was all.

“We rode in silence till we came
Unto his father’s wooded lane;
And then he spoke much as before:
‘Our paths part here for evermore;

But oh, Elvandine, hear me, pray,
Yours lead to peace, mine where it may.
And further, maiden, blame me not
If I the leprous curse forgot,
That herds me from the good and true,
And dreamed some fond day-dreams of you;
If I mistook your glorious eyes
For opening gates of Paradise.

“‘Go home to duty, prayer, and rest,
Forget me, you shall yet be blest;
Forget that such a blight as I
E’er crossed your path; and now good-by,’
He said, and soon was lost again
Within the winding, wooded lane.
One instant I had raised my eyes
To meet his gaze. Oh, ecstasies!
Within his glorious orbs there burned,
And flashed and glowed, and duty spurned,
The dear soul-secret brightly still,
Defying all his desperate will.
Slowly I took my pathway home,

In this new gathering of gloom
Which mocking fate had 'round me shed,
Till heart and almost hope seemed dead.

“All night and far into the day
Upon my fevered couch I lay,
Reasoning and thinking till my brain
With torturing memories grew insane.
I was not angry; well I knew
His labored coldness only grew
From fierce desire to right the wrong
He fondly feared his love had thrown
Across my young, untutored heart,
That had not suffered if apart
Our paths had led, and had not grown
Entwined beneath the shade of stone,
And oak and elm that summer day,
So dear, so near, so far away.

“I knew—nor asked the reason why—
A tear for tear, sigh for a sigh,
Throughout that long and anguished night

Met mine in pitying realms of light.
I felt his seeming harshness prove
A dearer sacrifice to love ;
I knew his heart was mine, and swore
To pity, love him more and more ;
Through good or evil, life or death,
To bless him with my latest breath ;
Hold my untasted lips for his,
If not on earth, in heaven to kiss.

“Next day, some hours after noon,
We heard that he again had gone
Abroad, his father knew not where ;
Again I tracked him with my prayer.
For many months he kept abroad,
I knew not where his sad feet trod.
We met no more until the night
The cruel rocks what meagre light
Dark fate had left his life were crushing,
And his bruised spirit homeward rushing,
And death was fusing fast away
The chafing bonds of men and clay.

“The sadness from his eyes had flown,
And such a radiant glory shone
Within their azure depths, I knew
Him all my own, divinely true.
His spirit now was peaceful, free
From every thought but heaven and me.
It was no sin to love him now,
To kiss his cheek, and lip, and brow;
I feared not before man and heaven
To own my heart to him was given.
He died with head upon my breast,
His cooling lips to mine were pressed;
And when at last he gasped in death,
I caught his latest sighing breath,
And hid it in my stricken breast,
Close to my heart—you know the rest,”

She said, and as her pensive tones,
As sadly sweet as angels' moans,
Just pulsing on the dew-damp air,
In tender echoes died in prayer;
A moment bowed her glorious head,

Then raising reverently, she said :
“ Look how the starry sentries come
Through the thin curtain of the gloom
That separates from us of earth
Dear forms of a diviner birth.
It is with such sweet solace fraught
To think of this as Ural thought.

“ One evening sitting on the stile,
With aunt and me to rest awhile,
He said the curtains of the night
But thinly hid the world of light
That glittered, glowed, and flashed above,
Lit by the eternal Son of Love ;
That happy spirits dashing through
Left rents within the curtains blue,
And through these rents perennial streams
Of heaven's eternal Son-light gleams.

“ See there,” she said, “ how fast they come,
These windows in the azure gloom !
Free, happy souls are dashing through

The gauzy curtaining of blue.
I comfort me with yearning sigh
That my time's coming by and by."
And pointing to the evening star,
That in its orbit blazed afar:
"Yonder's the window Ural left
When his free soul the curtain cleft.
There is no star in all the dome
So clear, so bright, so all alone
In glittering, splendid constancy—
No other's half so dear to me.

"Sometimes it seems to come so near
That I can see his presence, clear
And brightly plain, look out and bless,
As in that last farewell caress.
And sometimes, stepping sweetly through
That window in the dome of blue,
I feel his arms about me twine,
His spirit-lips press close to mine;
Inhale a fleeting tenderness,
Fragrant with heaven's ambrosial trees."

THE AUTHOR'S STORY.

SHE said "Good-by," tightened her rein,
I never heard her voice again.
Next morning's panting engine bore
Me to the work-day world once more.
I parted with the patriarch then,
To meet no more in ranks of men;
For ere another June was come,
His furlough came and he went home.
We severed with a fond good-by,
A moistening tear in either's eye,
As hands, joined in a lingering grasp,
Convulsively each other clasp;
The pulses thrilling fast beneath
That sacred promise, "Yours till death."

Five years had flitted all too soon,
When once again, along in June,
Adown the sloping market street
Of Wilmington my pilgrim feet

Pressed leisurely toward the bridge
Whose archways span from edge to ledge;
Pressed on toward the sleeping race,
With noonday dimpling on its face;
Past where the trusting globules feel
The cruel crushing of the wheel;
Whence some flow out beyond the mill,
While others chafe within the rill,
Perchance to flow, at length, amain,
But nevermore be joined again.

The busy bees were buzzing still,
The sunlight slumbering on the hill;
Above my head the lazy breeze
Trifled with half-consenting trees;
The river took its seaward way
Gently as on that other day;
Framed in with oak and elm and vine,
Flowed the unurning Brandywine.
The wide-mouthed bell with iron tongue
Its welcome chorus widely flung;
Voices, and then the hurrying tread,

By shelving rocks were echoed ;
On either bank the trees were ranged,
Not one familiar scene was changed.

Passing along, the little girl—
Her head now wreathed with many a curl—
Whose lagging feet that other day
Toward loom and shuttles' restless play
Unwilling and rebellious pressed,
Came forward from among the rest,
With timid, halting modesty,
And gave her shrinking hand to me.

"I see," she said, "you scarcely know
The little maid whom years ago
You asked why sighing maidens say
'Elvandine mourns Ural to-day?'"
Gladly her proffered hand I clasped,
And the next eager moment asked
How, in the grinding lapse of time,
The patriarch fared, and Elvandine?

“Alas! in Southern tomb,” she said,
“The patriarch’s honored dust is laid;
Brave Ural and his spirit-bride
Are sleeping silent, side by side.
Four years have spread their coverlets
Of grass and flowers upon their beds.
Elvandine was the first to go;
She left the gate ajar, and through
The patriarch’s spirit, cleaving night,
Careened beyond to world of light.

“To-morrow we shall meet again,
And all that’s passed I’ll tell you then.
To-morrow, I forgot to say,
Is dear Elvandine’s natal day;
The mills are stopped, the gates are shut,
The stores are closed, the shutters up;
A Sabbath stillness broods above
The valley, hillside, rock, and grove.
A festival of solemn rite
We hold from noonday until night

Upon the green, hard by the river,
Where, lovingly, they sleep forever.

“Maidens of high and low degree,
Mill-owners, toilers, peasantry,
All shades and grades of politics,
Religious creeds, to-morrow mix,
And bury all their feuds away
In honor of her natal day;
In tribute to her young life given
To purest, hopeless love and heaven;
In tribute to his gifted life,
Too gentle for this false world's strife.”
I promised her to come, and then
She ran and joined her friends again.

Silent I strode along the way
That led to where the lovers lay.
A marble arch, whose bases rest
On either crumbling sleeper's breast,
Keys halfway up above the mound,
Over the consecrated ground.

A white and tapering marble shaft
Towers from the arch for yards aloft.
On it, in letters bright with gold,
These few brief words the story told:
"Here sleep, in silence, side by side,
Fond Ural and his spirit-bride."
A foot or so above the grass
Their names in full were on the base.

The flowers, trailing from the ground,
Twined all the iron railing round,
And shook their dewy fragrance down
The lovers' lowly couch upon.
Stooping, I reverent kissed the sod
Her angel feet so oft had trod,
And then the past entrances me,
And I am lost in revery.

Again her fair young face I see,
Wrapped in its sad expectancy;
Again on my enchanted ear,
So sweetly, sadly, low, and clear,

The liquid cadence of her tones
Falls plaintive as would angels' moans.
Through the sad story of her love
That, banned on earth and doomed above,
To her who nightly watched his star,
Made earth seem dreary, heaven too far.
Again I see the patriarch's form
Shake off the years in heedless scorn,
And walk as straight and firm as I—
My tears, unchecked, fall flowingly.
I hardly know how long I stayed,
I only know the sun had made
His journey from the Meridies
Adown behind the western trees,
When the rude clanging of the bell
Athwart my quickening senses fell.

Rising, I trod the rocky lane
Toward the dear cottage once again,
That in embowered fragrance stood
Beyond the margin of the wood.

The old housekeeper, pleasantly,
Came to the door and welcomed me,
Bade me in memory of my friend
In my old room the night to spend.
And when the evening meal was o'er,
She told me, sitting by the door,
Her flowing tears unstayed, undried,
How her dear, noble master died.

THE HOUSEKEEPER'S STORY.

"'Twas late one autumn afternoon,
Some four months after you had gone,
I left him in apparent ease,
Returned and found him on his knees,
Humbly, as was his wont, in prayer—
He'd breathed his weary life out there.
We took him to his Southern home,
And laid him in the Regneigh tomb,
Where the now chaste magnolia keeps
Its fragrant watch o'er him, and weeps.

He left this dowered house to me,
From all, save one condition, free;
And that, to hold in sacred trust
His Ural's and Elvandine's dust.
The mill-hands and the peasantry
Make it an easy task for me.

“A month before, near eventide,
Elvandine, on her wonted ride
From visit to sick family,
Had paused beneath a chestnut tree,
That stands the ‘Hermit's Lodge’ hard by,
For shelter from a threatening sky.
The lightning through the storm-clouds played,
And laughed at havoc it had made;
Half sheltered from the pouring rain,
She gazed toward where her lover'd lain
Through all the weary longing years,
She'd floated off of time in tears.
At once there came a vivid flash,
An instantaneous, deafening crash,

As though the fiends, in furious glee,
Were fighting heaven's artillery.

"The day before there'd struggled up
Upon the 'Lodge' a little group
Of lads and lasses from the town;
And when at eve they straggled down,
By winding pathway to the base,
They'd left behind a looking-glass
Of little worth, unthinkingly,
Impaled against a neighboring tree.
The lightning with an instant skill
Had burned a picture there at will;
Had stamped upon that bit of glass
Rider and horse. The sweet, sad face,
The perfect form, the flowing hair,
Were faithfully depicted there.

"That evening when the storm was o'er,
The swains and maidens, as of yore,
Betook them through the curtaining gloom,
With flowers to Ural's lonely tomb.

Reclining on the cherished sod,
Where her sad feet so oft had trod,
Her pure tears were so wont to lave,
Elvandine slept on Ural's grave,
No more to wake, or wail, or weep—
She slept the sweet eternal sleep.
Her forehead showed a slight blue mark
Where the electric, subtile spark
Had kissed her with too fierce a breath,
And passed her through the gates of death.
Painless, and voiceless, instantly
Her soul dashed through the beckoning sky,
And left a new, bright window there—
Another avenue for prayer.

“She slept in peerless beauty, cold,
Above his crumbling ashen mould,
One pillowing arm beneath her head;
The same expression, gentle, sad,
Sweet, yearning, trusting, hoping, brave,
Her face had worn by Ural's grave
In life, was there; the suffering smile

Was frozen on her lips the while.
The chestnut-tree beyond the rock
Was rent and riven by the shock.
Her faithful steed at the steep base
Had found his final resting-place.

“With loving hands they bore her home
To yonder house of gray-ribbed stone;
Whence her pure form was fondly laid
With Ural’s in the sacred shade
Of the great arching elms where first
Her beauty on his vision burst.
Both graves have been these after-years
Watered by deluges of tears.”

Next morning I was shown the glass
On which the peerless, perfect face
Was limned by heaven’s messenger,
That came in such fierce haste for her.
The horse stood near the precipice,
She stroked his mane in mute caress;
Her eyes, lit up in holy trust,

Looked down towards her Ural's dust.
Her lips, half parted with the sigh,
"Ural!" were palsied instantly,
And left the smiling imprint there
Of spirit-lips, and answered prayer.

'Twas noontide, and the speeding sun
O'er half his daily course had run,
And stopped to bait his panting steeds
At Half-Way House of Meridies.
Women and men, the old and young,
Were streaming out the path along,
To shrine where, by the murmuring tide,
The lovers, lying side by side,
Their sweet, eternal sleep were taking,
Past sorrow, tears, and rent-hearts aching.

As reverently I join the throng,
And saunter thoughtfully along,
I note the modest, blushing pride
Of many a fond, expectant bride,

From whose hair wreath of orange buds,
Like crown of happiness, protrudes.
For dead Elvandine's natal noon,
In this sweet, mating month of June,
Witnessed the solemn marriage rite
Of many a happy maid and wight.

The ceremonies were begun
Exactly on the stroke of one;
At first, with head uncovered, bare,
The concourse stood in silent prayer.
And then, by twos, the reverent throng
Filed round the graves with chant and song;
And every one who'd pass the head
Would cast a flower on the bed.
Ere half the throng had marched around,
The floral tributes on the ground
To the enclosure's top arose;
In gospel mete it overflows,
And on the consecrated grass
Lies there in flowery, fragrant mass.

I left them as the setting sun
His last, faint pencilling gleam had thrown,
Through leaves of oak, and elm, and vine
That hedge the wailing Brandywine.
The ceremonies all were pass'd,
And they were chanting now the last.
Led by the new-made brides and grooms,
They filed again around the tombs,
Singing in chastened tone, and low,
This melody of rhythmic flow:

“Sleep! oh, sleep! fond happy lovers,
Mute beneath your fragrant covers,
Lying lightly on your breast.
No more sighing,
Fearing, crying;
No to-morrow,
Fraught with sorrow;
No more aching,
Fond hearts breaking;
No more parting,

Sad tears starting;
Sleep! oh, sleep! and rest! oh, rest!

“We would not turn back the pages,
Marked with gloom and dark presages,
For we know you now are bless’d.
No more sighing,
Fearing, crying;
No to-morrow,
Fraught with sorrow;
No more aching,
Fond hearts breaking;
No more parting,
Sad tears starting;
Sleep! oh, sleep! and rest! oh, rest!

“Sleep! oh, sleep! time’s crumbling finger
Never on your couch shall linger,
Never on your tomb be pressed.
No more sighing,

Fearing, crying;
No to-morrow,
Fraught with sorrow;
No more aching,
Fond hearts breaking;
No more parting,
Sad tears starting;
Sleep! oh, sleep! and rest! oh, rest!

“Sleep! oh, sleep! the youth and sages,
Down to the remotest ages,
Write you, chant you, with the blest.
No more sighing,
Fearing, crying;
No to-morrow,
Fraught with sorrow;
No more aching,
Fond hearts breaking;
No more parting,
Sad tears starting;
Sleep! oh, sleep! and rest! oh, rest!”

The music was so mournful, sweet,
The echoes came with willing feet
From their damp caverns in the wood,
And at the portals, listening, stood;
Then took up every note and trill,
Till glen and glade with music thrill,
And kept repeating, o'er and o'er,
And tossing back from either shore,
From every mantling echo-ledge,
Until they sank below the bridge,
Upon the sympathizing river,
And mingled with its dirge forever.

As down the glen I loitered home,
Enchanted by the echo-tone
That charmed away the glooms of night,
I said, I now am free to write—
To tell the story to the world
Of Ural and the faithful girl.
The bond of secrecy I gave
Is mouldering in a Southern grave,

And death has melted off the seal.
In honor I can now reveal
The story; and from many a note
This faithful history I wrote.

Whether I've written ill or well,
I'll trust posterity to tell;
So river, pouring this libation
To you, hear this, my

INVOCATION.

Oh, bowlder-fretted Brandywine,
Flower-epauletted Brandywine;
Thou angry dashing Brandywine,
Thou crystal flashing Brandywine;
Thou bubbling, gushing Brandywine,
Thou babbling, hushing Brandywine;
Thou mild, echoing Brandywine,
Thou wild, o'erflowing Brandywine;
Thou broad, unurning Brandywine,

Thou ne'er returning Brandywine;
Thou silver-crested Brandywine,
Thou never-rested Brandywine;
Thou wailing, teary Brandywine,
Thou never-weary Brandywine;
Thou sunlit shimmering Brandywine,
Thou moonlit glimmering Brandywine!
Oh, boulder-fretted, epauletted,
Angry dashing, crystal flashing,
Bubbling, gushing, babbling, hushing,
Mild, echoing, wild, o'erflowing,
Broad, unurning, ne'er returning,
Silver-crested, never-rested,
Wailing teary, never-weary,
Sunlit shimmering, moonlit glimmering,
Wimpling, dimpling Brandywine!
Framed in with oak, and elm, and pine,
With blowing flower, and clinging vine,
Be the eternal love-task thine,
While planets in their orbits shine,
To chant fond dirges at the shrine
Of Ural and his Elvandine.

Mingling with the mill-tower's chime,
That calls to work and resting time,
Through all the cycling flight of time,
Through all the cycling light of time,
Through all the cycling night of time,
Thou dallying, hurrying Brandywine.



